

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN THE HAITIAN MILIEU:
A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF A THEOLOGICALLY INTEGRATED,
SYSTEMIC COUNSELING METHOD

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BY
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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my sister and sweetheart, Myrta Alaïda Célestin (a.k.a Carla). Your unconditional love and support for me are remarkable and observed by everyone. You have gone through highs and lows to see this project completed. You have desired nothing but to see me succeed in all spheres of life. This accomplishment is yours. By God's grace, you have done all within your power to encourage progress in my life, spiritually, vocationally, relationally, and professionally. Not only do you take good care of me, but also you pray for me, you challenge me, you have gone the extra mile every time. You have been there for me. With a heartfelt desire, I pray that the Lord of all grace grant you the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of your labor for the rest of your life.

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ABSTRACT

The decision to write this thesis grows out of personal experience coming from my family history, observation in my community, and ministry as a pastor in the community. The focus is twofold: to explore the historical background of marriage and family in the Haitian context and to provide a practical application of a biblical approach to counseling system.

This thesis offers a historical overview of marriage and family among Haitians as well as a practical application of marriage and family counseling for Haitians. It offers an integrative approach of cross-cultural and biblical understanding with a systemic method of counseling. Using a description of qualitative method, it incorporates multiple sources of information and captures a unique perspective of Haitian family dynamics to provide a meaningful approach to marriage and family counseling for family therapists. This systemic method is called an ethnosociocultural model. It seeks to explore and understand typical behaviors noticeable among Haitian couples and individuals and the influences that govern their behavior. It provides a deep understanding and meaningful approach to marriage and family counseling for family therapists. The model is family-focused and culturally sensitive.

It is my hope and prayer that this thesis will serve as a resource and a guide to those who want to further their knowledge of the Haitian community and the historical trends that inform them, in order to better serve them and join in the ongoing discussion about the nature of understanding Haitian suffering and respond to those who are in distress.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

The importance of this research is enormous in terms of its scope and balance. The intent is to penetrate the existence of a slowly but surely growing problem in the Haitian immigrant community in the United States and abroad. This research outlines the reality that transcends the debate about Haitian families and why this generation of Haitians seemingly struggles for equilibrium in maintaining marital vows, raising expectations for their children, and declining opportunities when they establish a family in the United States. The thesis centers on the difficult and painful reality of the origins of Haitian families.

Being in the forefront as a pastor-teacher and counselor in the community, this author has witnessed how many Haitians have overcome painful and sometimes horrific journeys to a foreign land. They live in horrific conditions to make money in order to create a better life for themselves, their children, and extended family members in Haiti. In so doing, sometimes the person who strives to procure a better life feels abandoned by his or her mother, father, son, or daughter. These persons find themselves confused about how life really looks far from home. Or, a husband or a wife works hard to bring his or her relatives to their new home, but the reunion lasts only a few days, months, or years. Then, different members of the family begin to express a sense of resentment toward each other. They find it difficult to reconnect and to find the trust and the tolerance that often characterized the family. As a result, the wife or husband becomes angry or feels a sense of betrayal, disappointment, despair, or rejection. He or she feels unappreciated or

perhaps taken for granted. Then, bitterness starts to grow. The family is divided once again, and this time for the worse.

The goal of this thesis is to provide a more informed understanding of the history of marriage and family among Haitians, a multiracial people. The thesis studies the history of marriage and family in the Haitian milieu from pre-colonial times and how this historical trend resurfaces from generation to generation. It provides a biblical understanding of marriage and family with a practical application that will help Haitians to enhance relationships and achieve their marital goals. This thesis-project captures a unique perspective in the study of the history of marriage and family in the Haitian milieu. The decision to write this thesis grows out of personal concern for Haitian families in need and the lack of understanding of Haitian culture on the part of professional counselors. Much has been written on other relevant topics, but no other thesis gives an account of marriage and family structure in Haitian society, nor is much consideration given to the relationship between families and therapists.

This research study will provide practical, easy-to-apply training tools and competent models that can be used as a benchmark for educators and therapists who work with Haitians. Methodologically, the research will further analyze the stressors of slavery in marriage and families in the Haitian milieu. However, related studies on the causes of divorce and marital distress underline the fact that family values do decline as a result of detachment among family members. This study will propose ways in which to evaluate the ability of individual Haitians to cope with their daily life conflicts.

This thesis proposes a new model that represents the latest work on psychotherapy that combines ethnicity with race, family values, language, religion, and politics. The

primary limitation of the study involves the generalizability of these cited points. Thus, the proposed ethnosociocultural model will be limited to the historical understanding of marriage and family in the Haitian milieu. The author will outline the historical factors that concern the model (i.e., race, ethnicity, religion, language, and politics) via historical facts about Haiti. Then through the use of case vignettes, the author of this thesis will illustrate important cross-cultural issues useful for consideration in counseling sessions. Consequently, the author of this thesis suggests the need for a conscious effort on the part of a therapist to create a delicate balance that takes seriously both didactic and pragmatic approaches to cross-cultural counseling. The research focuses specifically on the history of marriage and family in the Haitian milieu from its genesis to the present. It studies both marital and nonmarital unions and points to the isolation for lower-class blacks as interracial unions increase and to a generational bifurcation of the black class structure directly tied to issues of ethnoracial identity.

Finally, the author will address a biblical worldview for family counseling with Haitians. He contends that there must be a clearly articulated biblical worldview in order to shape the Haitian conceptual perspectives of marriage and family. This Christian worldview will contribute to create cohesion between the reflective balance of family and individuality in the Haitian family cycle. The individual is a member of a family structure. They both change within time in the context of their relationship. Development and maturity are understood within the context of the family structure. For the individual and the family unit, there is a larger context of social culture, which creates norms and values. The new generation can be understood only through the lens of the old generation. The fine points of distinctions can be understood only in the context of environment: social class and social

influences. Then therapeutic implications can be assessed only in the context of the environment.

The thesis also reflects on becoming a couple and becoming a parent. There is a level of transformation that takes place in the family. After marriage, the son and the daughter have a new role in the family structure. He or she becomes a father or a mother. With this new trend come new challenges and opportunities. In the process, the older parents are aging and becoming dependents. Then there is reversal in principle: the one who was once a son or a daughter is now the parent of his or her parent. There is a delicate balance between strengths and vulnerability. Along with all other issues that come with life and marital engagement, society is now affected at a greater level by the ethical dilemma of divorce and homosexuality. The writer argues that interaction between the therapist and the client is crucial to bring about result from a counseling standpoint. Although we were created with the image of God, our sinful nature informs our way of life. We are broken and hopeless until our restless hearts find rest in Jesus. We have been greatly oppressed from the day of our birth. Had it not been for the grace of God, we would surely be hopeless in the fallen world. Care for the soul becomes very important in the existence of humankind. To alleviate suffering, there must be concern not just for the well-being of the physical body but also for the soul. There is a great need in the Haitian community for the integration of soul care and physical health. Thus, it becomes vital for counselors to be better trained cross-culturally in order to be helpful to the needs in the community.

The conclusion provides insights for family therapists, counselors, clergy, and lay leaders in the helping professions to effectively intervene in the marital crises and

conflicts among Haitian families. It will provide an overview of what takes place in marital counseling and what the helper may expect during and after a counseling session.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING MARRIAGE AND FAMILY AMONG HAITIANS

The Pre-Colonial Era: From Genesis to Year 1492

History is silent about the formative stage of the natives who inhabited the island which was once known as Ayiti (Haiti)-Quisqueya or Bohio, Indian words that mean “vast land; high mountains; land of delights” (Joseph, 2006, p. 19). The inhabitants were known as Arrawaks or Taíno Indians, a sweet and peaceful people. They enjoyed a peaceful life with a great civilization and political rest. They often greeted people with a dove to symbolize a desire to live in peace and harmony with their neighbors.

Much later, they received an invasion of immigrants from their neighbor countries, such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, Mexico, and Peru. Upon their arrival, the Arrawaks referred to them as the Caraïbes to denote their origins. The Caraïbes had a distinct reputation as great warriors who were cruel to their neighbors and ate human flesh (Dorsainvil, 1942, p. 10).

From 1492 and beyond, Haitians would experience an imposed culture that would soon crush not only their conscience and spirit but also their future. They suffered constant repression and harassment and were subjected to slavery. In this political turmoil and social chaos, families were destabilized.

As a result of slavery, the Haitian natives suffered genocide by the hands of the Spaniards. Everything that is known about the history and development of Haiti points to its colonial expansion experiences, foreign invasions, frequent migrations, and longstanding practice of interracial marriage.

The Colonial Era: From 1492 to 1803

In the early sixteenth century, the occupiers began to export black people from Africa to replace Haitians, who died by the thousands almost daily. These blacks were taken from Africa to Haiti, also known as Saint Domingue by the French. They were from “Congo, Aradas, Nagos, Ibos, etc . . . They were taken from the African coast, these unfortunate people were thrown into a vessel expressly for them, named le Négrier” (Dorsainvil, 1942, p. 30).

On the threshold of their life, sorrow, despair, fear, and death overcame these young men and women when they found themselves piled on top of each other in ships sailing toward the West Indies. Taken captive, they left behind their loved ones, their culture, and their heritage as they sailed for the unknown. Historians found nothing practical from the lifestyle of the slave masters that could have predisposed young slaves to establish what is known as orderly marriage or a stable family.

Many of the African slaves were very young. They were taken from their families and placed on a plantation. They had little or no experience about how to be a marriage partner or a parent. The only example they had was that of their master on their plantation. The master may have his wife at home and a female slave as a sex partner. The intimate relationship between the master and slave woman was often for the sexual satisfaction of the master. The female slave could never conceive of herself as a concubine to her master, nor would she be called a mistress (Leyburn, 1941, p. 178), though many female slaves would feel proud to be a sex partner to their master. But it became a common practice for a female slave to make herself available for the sexual satisfaction of her master in order that her child might be freed from slavery (Leyburn,

1941, p. 178). On almost every plantation, masters allowed their male and female slaves to cohabit with whomever they chose. Leyburn explains that almost nothing was done to prevent sexual abuse among slaves (1941, p. 179).

The European practice of loose relationships with women was considered to be a model for young and inexperienced slaves, who grew up witnessing this lifestyle and adopted the model as if it were the norm for good living. As the number of *Afranchis* or *Mulâtres* (freedmen and freedwomen) increased, the more cavalier they became about intimate relationships. It came to a point where people got involved in intimate relationships for the sake of acquiring wealth or status. The divide between the “haves” and the “have nots” was always apparent in Haiti. There were three classes of people: the whites (*Blancs*), the freedmen and freedwomen (*Afranchis*), and the slaves. The slaves made up the majority of the people of the land. They were the poorest. The *Code Noir de 1685* (Dorsainvil, 1942, p. 53), also known as the Constitution of 1685, stated that white people and *Afranchis* were equal under the law.

However, the constitution clearly discriminated against blacks and declared them inferior to white people and *Afranchis*. The colored people, namely, the black people, made up the majority of the nation. They were the labor force. Even though the code granted the same rights to whites and freed people, “the freedman and woman could not hold public offices, they were forbidden to learn or practice certain professions, and they were assigned special seats at the local theaters and the church” (Dorsainvil, 1942, p. 53).

Wealth was to be acquired by any means necessary. Some slaves would engage in a marital vow for the sake of securing wealth and social status for themselves and their children. Others would seek intimate relationships with whites or *Afranchis* for frivolous

reasons as skin color or hairstyle. Like their counterparts in the white community, the Afranchis often had illicit relationships with slave women. In some rare cases, the children of those relationships were given the opportunity to travel to France, where they could receive a good education. It was not until the insurrection of 1791 that the slaves began to see the need to order their social conduct. It began with François Dominique Toussaint Louverture, a descendant of the royal family from Aradas, one of the first African groups sold into slavery and deported to Haiti in the early sixteenth century. He became powerful politically and militarily. He correctly assumed that a great moral dilemma would befall his society once people started having illicit relationships for which they did not want to be accountable. He foresaw that immoral conduct would have a lasting effect on the economy and the political establishment. Toussaint Louverture was a faithful Catholic. He encouraged the slaves to make moral decisions regarding their intimate unions and be people of great moral character (Leyburn, 1941, p. 179). But, since sexual misconduct emanates from humanity's sinful nature, Toussaint Louverture found it difficult to regulate morality.

Nonetheless, he encouraged people to get married as a way to prevent social collapse in the near future. Apart from Toussaint Louverture's effort, nothing in the colonial tradition had taught blacks about marriage. Those who wanted to get married would find it difficult because of their financial circumstances. The slaves practiced an ancient tradition from some parts of Africa that demands a man must pay a large sum of money to a woman's parents (Leyburn, 1941, p. 178). To observe such a practice meant that a man must have some wealth at his disposal, a luxury that slaves from the 1790s to

the 1800s did not have (Leyburn, 1941, p. 179). Those who had money preferred to lure as many women as they pleased instead offering them marriage.

The Post-Colonial Era: From 1804 to Present

In 1804, the Haitians overthrew the French and thus ended slavery in their land. The country continued to be desolate and void of structural norms. The tentative reform of Toussaint Louverture did not take root. Instead, the country had to deal with the pressing issue of social inequality. After the insurrection of 1798, Haitians continued to practice the patterns they inherited from the Europeans. The need to regulate marriage continued to resurface. According to Leyburn (1941, pp. 177-192), General Jean-Jacques Dessalines emerged as the new leader of the newly freed nation. He resolved to establish a law that would create a proper structure for marriage and moral conduct. He called attention to men and women who were having children out of wedlock. In his Imperial Constitution (1805), he encouraged civil union while claiming that marriage is a socially virtuous state to be cultivated (Leyburn, 1941, p. 177). The new emperor would go around the country to lecture about his new constitution and the provisional line for civil union as a form of marriage. He instructed people about the impact of their moral conduct in the generations to come, should they continue to follow the patterns they learned from their former masters.

Yet, the general showed no restraint in his own sexual conduct. Even though he was married, his security guards would make sure that he had a woman to satisfy his sexual impulses in every town to which he traveled. This practice continued to surface among the Haitian military until the 1990s. Reportedly, he employed seductive means,

such as monetary gifts or other special favors to seduce women whom he deemed to be respectable. Many young and attractive females honored the opportunity to spend a night in bed with the emperor. In *Histoire D'Haiti*, T. Madiou reported how Dessalines' immoral conduct gave way to malavolence and personal license among his lieutenants.

Putting no restraint upon his passions, he traveled about, followed by actors, dancers, musicians, and courtesans. An indefatigable dancer, as soon as he arrived in a place he gave a ball. Under Toussaint Louverture, in order to please the Governor-General everyone approached the holy altar; under Dessalines one gained glory by dancing well. The emperor, giving himself up to scandalous pleasures, forgot that he was head of the state. The greatest immorality reigned about him. With a gaiety sometimes grotesque, he told the ladies who frequented his court how much he admired their beauty, no matter how ugly they actually were. Following his example, his major officers of state kept concubines in every town in the empire . . . when the emperor entered a town, the honest women were gravely disturbed, for their virtue was menaced not only by him but also by his officers of state. Many mothers kept their daughters shut up to keep them from the notice of those who were powerful enough to take them, with impunity, by violence. (Cited in Leyburn, 1941, p. 239)

Under Dessalines, it was scarcely wise for a prominent man to marry an attractive wife, because the emperor might soon set himself to seduce her (Leyburn, 1941, p. 181). This laxity in conduct continued for a long time during the era of Dessalines and continued to be the norm that defined relationships, marriage, and sexual conduct.

Childbearing and Inheritance

Haiti is a unique nation in the sense that it is multiracial in its origin. A Haitian might be the son or the daughter of a man who had four different wives from different nations. This wife or concubine could have been an Indian or the descendant of an Indian; an African or the descendant of an African from Congo, Aradas, Nagos, Ibos, Dahomea, Ghinea, or other parts of Africa; a European or the descendant of a European from Spain, France, England, Portugal, or the Netherlands; a Caribbean or the descendant of a Caribbean from Martinique, Guadeloupe, Bahamas, or the Dominican Republic; an American or the descendant of an American from Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Canada, or the United States. During the colonial period, three groups of people were distinguished in Haiti: blacks, descendants of black Africans; whites, descendants of white Westerners; and mulattos, descendants of a black and a white person. The law of the land from the French perspective was that if a child was born from an illicit relationship, that child was illegitimate; therefore, she or he was not to inherit from the father, not even the father's last name. A woman could not approach the man she believed to be the father of her child for any kind of support. Even though the law of May 28, 1805, clearly stated that "it is necessary to fix in immutable order the status rights of children born out of wedlock, and . . . it is important to reconcile what nature and society owe them with the political interest of the state," many illegitimate children were being brought up in extreme poverty and without an education. According to Madiou, Dessalines contended that all Haitians had a right to share their father's inheritance (Leyburn, 1941, p. 181). But nothing in the law detailed that clearly, nor did the law encourage marriage.

The status of a child would depend on the father's will alone. A child could have inheritance in his or her mother's lineage, but from his or her father's side, that was not always clear. A child could not earn the title of "natural" or "illegitimate" unless the father was married. If a couple was getting married legally, there was a provision in the law for the couple to recognize a child who was born before marriage. That child would carry the last name of his father, if the father chose to recognize him or her. Such a child would have an inheritance from his or her father. Should the father refuse to recognize the child as his, the child would have an inheritance only from his or her mother. And that trend would continue for generation after generation.

One other factor that contributed to the moral decline of Haitian marriage was the war for independence. Many men were killed, and often the army would keep thousands of men away from their families. While being away from each other, one or both partners might engage in extramarital affairs. In such relationships, children were often born. As time went by, the man was moved to another location in the country and the mother was left to take care of the child. Thus, mothers became the leaders of society. There was emphasis on maternal relationship as opposed to paternal relationship. The society that was once patriarchal became matriarchal. As a result, the household was often referred to as the household of the mother as opposed to the father. Even a married man would say the house was not his, that a man did not own a house. Instead, he would say, it was the home of madame (speaking of his wife).

In addition to numerous societal issues, the government of Dessalines had to deal with divorce. Divorce was allowed in case of adultery or incompatibility of character or by mutual consent. The so-called adulterous act was the result of a man abandoning a

woman or because a woman was forced to have sex with a powerful man in the government. Dessalines did not take steps to reverse this new trend in his empire (Leyburn, 1941, p. 181). When Dessalines left the political scene, Henri Christophe and Alexandre Pétion came to power. Haiti was divided into two kingdoms, Henri Christophe holding power in the entire northern side and Pétion in the southern and the western. In his first decision to establish order in the land, Henri Christophe proscribed all relationships between men and women outside of marriage as “concubinage, libertinage” (Leyburn, 1941, p. 181). And he declared that these acts weaken the family system and thus destroy a society. But he did not put an end to the evil that he claimed was destroying Haitian society. In speeches, the new emperor would urge people to get married, but legally nothing was done in that regard.

In 1806 there was a report of an increase in the number of marriages. It was credited to Henri Christophe’s campaign for marriage. In fact, people resisted his approach. He then tried to force marriage upon people. In 1806, he arrested a group of women who were unmarried and commanded his lieutenants to take them in marriage. At other times, he selected young men and women and ordered them to be married. The other means that Henri Christophe used to force people into marriage was the threat of confiscating their property. Madiou claimed that about 999 Haitians out of 1,000 were born out of wedlock (Madiou, 1848 vol. 3, p. 411). Even though Madiou is critical of Henri Christophe’s approach, he nonetheless sees the severity of the problems that the new nation faced. Henri Christophe was reacting against a provision made in the law drafted by Dessalines that guaranteed inheritance to natural children and encouraged people to remain unmarried. In the law of March 25, 1807, he rescinded Dessalines’ law

by making it impossible for an illegitimate child to inherit from his or her father. A positive result of his action was noted in the Royal Almanac of the year 1814: “Great attention is paid to morals and manners: Marriage is honored, protected, and encouraged; no Haitian who is unmarried can fill any place of distinction. Divorce is not permitted,” says the author of the almanac, *Le Compte de la Limonade* (Leyburn, 1941, p. 184).

Leyburn says that while Henri Christophe was making progress in the north, Pétion in the west did not have to wrestle with that issue. Pétion claimed that the élite class (whites and mulattos) continued to make proper legal marriages and so insure the inheritance of their legitimate children (see Appendix 1).

Bringing up children with such a heritage would certainly create unique perspectives on marriage and family among Haitians. But, the fact of the matter was that while the elite colored people continued to make proper legal marriages and so insure the inheritance of their legitimate children, the common people lived their family life without weddings, and if property questions arose, custom ruled, backed by public opinion in their little communities (Leyburn, 1941, p. 184). This attitude, which was the norm in the colonial period, continues in the present day. As was true in the colonial era, because a man or woman is single, that does not mean the person is celibate. He or she might be in a sexual relationship until the person feels it is time find someone else or seal the union for an interest.

In March 1818, Jean Pierre Boyer succeeded Pétion. Haitians openly accepted as a social norm or social fact any illicit relationship outside of marriage. They termed it *plaçage* (common-law relationship). At this point, words like “concubinage” and “libertinage” were deemed too strong and thus crude. But *plaçage* was more indirect and

carried no connotation of disrepute (Leyburn, 1941, p. 137). A common-law relationship was not accepted by all, but it was deemed better to be *placée* than to be in concubinage. Thus, the common people lived without marriage. Many members of the privileged groups enjoyed sexual relations with whatever attractive men or women came their way.

For people of the lower class, marriage had an entirely different meaning. It meant an opportunity to rise in social status and a better future for their children. Romance was irrelevant; material interest influenced decisions. This attitude of the French planters, current in France and in contemporary Haitian society, was the standard of the freedmen. In 1857, Morau de Saint Rémy wrote, “*Plaçage*, or primitive marriage, is still one of the Haitian customs. It requires no civil or religious formality. Some of the unions are more respectable than those sanctified by civil and religious law” (cited in Leyburn, 1941, 189).

Dantès Bellegarde goes even further in his effort to convince society to accept the unacceptable. He says,

Haitians have been accused of immorality because they practice free unions. This reproach is unjust. Concubinage is without the doubt the rule among the people [that is, peasants and workmen]; but it constitutes a sort of *connubium injustum* (illegal marriage) which, in many cases, has nothing immoral about it, certain “*plaçages*” having more solidity and seriousness than a large number of regular marriages. In order to understand the existence of this custom and its persistence in the lower classes of Haitian society, one must go back to the colonial epoch: the whites kept numerous concubines; white women were few in Saint-

Domingue. (The white population of Saint-Domingue was composed in 1789 of 30,826 souls, of whom 21,166 were men and 9,660 women—not counting soldiers and sailors.) On the other hand, the Negroes did not marry each other, because they did not care at all to have wives whom the master might “abuse,” to use the word of Père du Tertre, moreover, masters did not require their slaves to be married: they mated them with a view to obtaining fine “products.” Concubinage tends to appear among us, or at least to become more discreet. In the cultivated class people generally marry, and the girls in most modest condition--having passed through the primary schools—resign themselves willingly today to the diversion of their unused affections to cats and other domestic animals if no one offers to lead such girls to the altar. (cited in Leyburn, 1941, 189)

It is worth noting what John Candler, an English Quaker wrote in 1842: “But few of the merchants or principal inhabitants are married men: concubinage is common, and unhappily, regarded as not dishonorable.

Whenever a ball is given, or a large party invited, the invitation is equally extended to ‘Monsieur et Madame_____’ or to ‘Monsieur _____ and his lady’; and by this compounding of moral distinctions among the upper classes, the evil descends to the lower ranks and becomes perpetuated” (cited in Leyburn, 1941, p. 188).

Such practice was followed discreetly, for to divulge would mean to destroy a family’s status and reputation. Even though the informal union was considered immoral, it was scarcely condemned, except by the church. These patterns have been passed from one generation to the next. Most Haitians are born to parents who may live together for a

long time but are not married. Or, they may be born to parents who were once married but divorced. Or, they may be born out of wedlock. As the people multiplied, the related customs of the colonial era prevailed.

From the European colonial era, Haitians learned to practice formal marriage to establish a family with social ambition, casual sexual relations for pleasure outside of marriage, and the claim of legitimate children to all property and illegitimate ones to nothing (Leyburn, 1941, p. 190).

From Haiti to the United States

It is against such background that modern Haitians take their concept of marriage with minor revision from the Western world via Hollywood. But, like Toussaint Louverture, many Haitians of the modern era have seen this practice as a prescription for disaster in a growing society. In fact, since the colonial time, people of wealth chose married partners for political influences, social status, as a way to increase their own stature and wealth. Bringing up children with such baggage where there is no apparent trend to follow has certainly made marriage and family very difficult among Haitians. Many young couples today are in so-called common law marriages, which are the same as *plaçage*. Among those who are in common-law marriages are people who were once either married, separated, divorced or in a previous loose relationship. In this day, the practice of common-law marriage continues in secretive form. Secretly and consciously, many Haitians would argue that marriage is a serious matter and that they do not want to enter it carelessly. Some may argue that cohabitation is not the definition of marriage. The vast majority of Haitians who cohabite may confess that they know marriage is

sacred and that it is a serious matter. Nonetheless, some may view a common-law marriage as a contract.

Empirical knowledge about the state of marriage in the Haitian community in the United States is not well known at this point. The issues of adjustment and adaptation are among the biggest discrepancies between husband and wife, and their level of marital satisfaction is increasingly reduced. Some married couples find it difficult to learn, negotiate, accommodate, and adjust to marriage. Their relationship often become overloaded, as each spouse engages in activities independent of the other. Families that are reunited in the United States after a long separation may find that their spouse has developed a different philosophy of life that they cannot cope with. At times, unmet needs create conflict. As each partner turns to the other for help, a vicious cycle may create a strain in the relationship, and the damage they do to each other might be irreparable. If they are people who claim to live their lives on principle, they may be living together for the sake of other people and to the detriment of themselves. Some Haitians may enter into a marital relationship with a sense that the partner must meet his or her needs. The other factor that may make adaptation difficult for Haitians is the change in the socioeconomic status (Keny, 2007). Often, migration pushes Haitians to higher privilege and economic status. Change in economic status may mean a better-paying job or simply having a job. In the United States, Haitian children are torn by conflicting social and cultural demands, while facing all kinds of challenges that children in general face as they mature. In general, Haitians do not have a problem with integrating to the mainstream culture. They advocate for one to maintain one's own cultural values while incorporating the positive values of the adopted culture. Most

Haitians oppose isolationist sentiment that is, avoiding interaction with the context of the daily life.

However, Haitians have issues with assimilating to the values and norms of the mainstream culture, such as portrayed by black American cultural forms of identity, the hip-hop culture in general. Whether a family is deemed to be religious or secular, moral orientations are well-developed and encouraged. A child's compliance with a parent's request is seen as the result of the parents' legitimate right to influence a positive outcome for the future of their child. Haitian parents never fail to use their influence to outline clearly the family rules, norms, and expectations that govern the life of a child in the home and school. Some of the family rules and regulations control the frequency of a child's exposure to outside influence. Haitians believe that the standards that they set at home are the underlying principles that should conduct social order. At times, the rules and expectations can be ambiguous to the child; most of the time, this ambiguity is due to how children try to negotiate the process because the child has difficulty abiding by the rule. But most children know the line that they should never cross. Thus, young Haitians grew up internalizing norms concerning proper behavior during social contact when they are away from home. The children's behavior is shaped by a longstanding, intergenerational pattern of family values and personal and professional norms.

The extent to which attachment mediated the relationship between Haitian family conflicts and depression is yet to be researched. Nonetheless, research about other aspects of family relationships concludes that family conflict has both direct and indirect effects on depression (Belizaire, 2007). She contends that relationships and coping strategies go together. Interpersonal relationships between parents and children and among siblings are

guided by the established norms of the family and its code of ethics. In the Diaspora, at some homes, the procedure is quite straightforward; at others, the roles might be a bit confused. But typically, parents declare a clear hierarchy among the siblings. They then delegate responsibility and allocate resources to the older child in accordance with the norms and the children's capabilities to take leadership. This principle is not always clearly defined in homes where the siblings are of different fathers or mothers or where one of the parents in the home is not the biological parent of the children. Therefore, the children are usually the focal point of decision making. Psychological attachment between parents and children in this kind of setting is usually internalized.

A genuine desire to exercise parental control and to help children to succeed in the future causes many Haitian parents to be in conflict with laws in the United States. Haitians perceive it to be their responsibility to care and provide for their home. These dispositions help them make decisions about how to use their authority to teach and to dictate how their children will perform at home and outside of the home. The particular type of management method that they apply may be deemed inappropriate by state departments of social services (DSS). Regardless of the law of the land, Haitians always feel motivated by a desire to shield their children from being negatively perceived in their community and abroad. Haitian parents refuse to allow their children to be in the street at any time. Instead, they closely monitor and restrict the child's social activity and general mobility in an attempt to protect them against drugs and violence. Because of that parenting style, Haitian children perform as goal-oriented and success-oriented during classroom activities. Most of these students are said to be high achievers, whereas others are not so high in their achievement for issues not related to parenting. Haitian families

mostly function in the face of severe hardships and daily challenges both physically and psychologically.

The Extended Family

In the Haitian milieu, the extended family is the place where values are upheld. The extended family provides resources to individual members. Family members provide a level of comfort for each other. Haiti can be best described as a patriarchal society in which the father or the husband is the head of household and/or breadwinner and the caretaker. (The understanding is that the husband must be the breadwinner, unless the family is struck by misfortune. Then the roles of breadwinner would be reversed.) However, always with a careful approach, the wife assumes the economic welfare of her family while making sure that her husband still feels that he is in charge and in control of the family. The wife is understood as having a duty to her husband as his helpmate; she loves her husband and cares for him. In the new role of breadwinner, the wife strives to build her husband's reputation within society, and she protects his reputation. This cultural expectation often puts a woman like that at the peak of society. She would be considered a matriarch, one who transcends the norms and succeeds. The wife's traditional obligation to perform domestic services, care for her children, and comply with sexual needs of her husband all reflects society's expectation of a matriarch.

The natural family is considered to be much larger than the nuclear one. It consists of not only the two monogamous heterosexual parents and their children but also the grandparents and other members of the extended family. From a cultural perspective, it is in that family context that all essential needs are met. For Haitians, family is a social

institution that is patterned in predictable ways of thinking and behaving: beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms concerning important aspects of life. The family is organized around vital aspects of group living and serves essential functions in society. The extended family provides a network of property ownership and support that contributes to the family's growth in society. The members of the family continue to be obedient to familial authority, which is valued more than individual advancement and growth. Furthermore, loyalty to the ties of blood kinship typically is valued more highly than intimacy between spouses. In the United States, this tension between family loyalty and individual advancement or couples' intimacy continues to exist. Some people would attempt to break up their marriages if one spouse is perceived to compete with kin for scarce resources. For example, many families live with the grandparents as an integral part of the family. In some rare cases, an uncle, an aunt, a cousin, or other siblings from previous relationships may live under the same roof. This family structure provides some sort of emotional security for family members. As a result of this type of attachment, people are closely tied to a small urban area, suburban area, or village. They may move around, sometimes quite far, but they remain emotionally connected even when sons and daughters leave the family land and the bonds of kinships are not shattered. Private life in the family becomes very important in meeting needs for human contact and emotional environment. Each member of the family acts to provide emotional security by countering family members' feelings of isolation and giving them a sense of belonging. The families are expected to create a level of safety for each other's comfort. This is not to say that individual members of the family cannot solve their particular difficulties with each other. But all is done in the spirit of preserving the family bond.

In this context, almost everything an individual does is done as a member of the family. The children inherit the family's wealth. The primary function of the family is to provide for responsible childbearing and economic support of its members. People in this part of the world truly value tradition, duty, and personal sacrifice for the common good and individual submission to authority, God, or fate. Personal decisions are influenced and limited by social context. Not only demographic but also economic conditions affect the welfare of families. In the area where this author grew up, some families were without children, or some children were raised with either a father or a mother. The childless family is nevertheless considered as atypical. The single-parent family usually consists of a widowed or a divorced person who live with other relatives. Thus the children grow in a safe environment. And these people are often not perceived to be single family, because they belong to a larger family system, namely, the extended family. Groups of adults and children who live together and share aspects of their lives in common are known as communes. Communal living is one way in which a society remains almost delinquent-free; the extended family members provide for the needs of the child. The commune offers a way of thinking for these young people. The Haitian church in the Diaspora also reflects this family trend. The church encourages communal life as a way to provide a safer environment for single parents and their children. In the same context, the childless family also fulfills a parental role in the church by providing for and being involved in the lives of needy friends and family members.

Haitian parents take responsibility to guide, nurture, and protect their children in developing competent adult behavior. The interpersonal communication patterns tend to be marked by frequent dialogue and consistent limits being set for the child. Haitian

parents are behavior-oriented parents. Even though they may not have achieved the level of excellence they demand of their child or children, they use certain organizational and psychological patterns with their children. This parenting style is often typical of the parent's upbringing in his or her own family. Three psychosocial elements are worth noting about Haitian upbringing. First, historically speaking, Haitians parents had been very diligent and direct in their supervision of their children's education. They have always taken shared responsibility for child rearing and family tasks. Second, Haitians believe that the economic survival of a person rests heavily upon his or her education. To them, the survival needs of a family come first; because of that, all of the family's physical resources need to be invested to acquire a good education. Haitians of any generation past would do their best to foster in their children a love for education and a desire to strive for educational success and economic self-sufficiency. Third, one of the means Haitian parents use to pass on this sentiment is their own life. They often use events in their family circumstances to convince their children of the necessity to plan for a better future. These parents honestly believe if their children's opportunities had been given to them when they were growing up, their achievement in life could have been greater. Many Haitian parents are victims of economic and educational lack of privilege, but they refuse to create a sense of victimization in their own children. They work hard to create a sense of family progress and personal progress through the school successes of their children. They strongly believe that if their children are to escape the difficult life that they have endured, the children must become literate, articulate, and skilled in a craft. Whether a Haitian parent is married, single through divorce, or otherwise, the psychosocial interpretation is the same. Regardless of their generation, Haitians view

their past and current experiences in life as the determining factor for orientation or disorientation. Whatever decisions they make about what to do with children in the home are influenced by their own psychological experience: emotional frustration that resulted from school, neighborhood, or workplace biases and their experience of inequalities. They tend to do their best to ensure that their children do not become victims of persistent, devastating traumas (Kaplan, 1998, pp. 20-89). Countering gender and class, Haitian parents, men and women, perceive their gender roles as a salient identification of self. That is, men and women are comfortable enough to take on the responsibilities associated with being a parent. When it comes to domestic responsibilities, Haitian parents differ in their philosophies. For some families, house cleaning, cooking, and other things relating to the home pertain to women only; men engage themselves in the heavy work in the house and outside of the house. For other families, everyone must do an equal share. The process of learning gender roles is important to describe because of its direct effect in shaping Haitian family structure.

In the Haitian context, every child, male or female, has a right to education, even though at times in history this may not have been the reality. At times, for the sake of family welfare, Haitian women may choose or be asked or forced to forgo education. From generation to generation, such an act has never been perceived as a violation of a woman's rights but rather as a heroic act. Haitian mothers do effectively communicate to their children, male or female, behavior and the kind of thinking that will help them succeed in life. Young girls are taught to avoid reliance on men for their future because Haitian women may have had experience with male philanderers or wife beaters and other kinds of abuses in their relationships. The struggle between trust and mistrust in

relationship will always surface in dialogue about life issues. No one family member was homeless or poor by today's economic standard. The reason for that is simple. When one person in the family is in dire need, it is perceived to be shameful for all the other family members in the eyes of their neighbors. Thus, the family is compelled to come to the help of the one in need. Most of the time, economic hardship in a particular family is already addressed prior to the knowledge of an outsider. Parents are expected to care for their children and be responsible morally for their extended family members. In contemporary society, the family has become less of an economic necessity. People's livelihood depended on their farms (in the Haitian context) or in their job, which is often the male's line of provision.

Interracial, Interfaith, and Intercultural Marriages

Generally, Haitians are not fascinated with any boundaries of nationality, ethnicity, and religion. Their marriages may be interracial as well as interfaith. These marriages are confidently expected to last for a long time. Some Haitians may enter such relationship with a genuine intent to live in love and harmony with their spouse. The reasons might be as diverse as a desire to explore the other's culture and customs, because they feel more accepted by the family of the other person, or a feeling or perception that color or ethnicity is not a relevant issue for marriage. He or she may enter this type of relationship for pure love and intimacy for the other partner. Inter-marriage among Haitians is not a new phenomenon. Since the colonial and postcolonial era, Haitians intermarried, whether with blacks from different parts from Africa or people from other parts of the Western world. Based on observation, Haitians who come to the

United States as children and the second generation of Haitian Americans are more likely to marry outside of their ethnic group. The likelihood of intermarriage increases among the second generation of Haitians. Those who choose to marry outside of the Haitian community may do so in order to rebalance the structure of their life. Moving away from their kindred is a way to redefine their values (Ostine, 2001). The extended families may stereotype the non-Haitian spouse negatively in order to promote the image of Haitian values (Ho, 1990). This behavior often puts family members at odds with each other. Or cultural differences may strain the relationship. Other Haitians may enter such relationships for wrong reasons.

For example, some Haitians marry a person of a different race in order to ensure their legal status in the United States. Others do so to fulfill a sexual fantasy or a preference for a certain skin color for their children, with a view to raising their social status. Others want to raise their economic status; such a relationship may result in increased economic dependence or independence. Others may enter an interracial marriage to get back at a former lover or to escape from an abusive family or spouse. Or, a young adult may wish to rebel against parental or societal rules (Furtado, 2007, pp. 14, 64).

Whatever the reason might be, Haitian parents would always show kindness to the person of another race. They would demonstrate respect and offer the best treatment possible. In their relationship with the person of another race, there could be a feeling of superiority or a desire to show the grandeur of the Haitian culture and ethnicity. But this feeling would always be hidden behind an assumption of normalcy (Ostine, 2001). When

the Haitian parents are reaching out to the parent of their child's spouses their behavior is circumscribed in terms of boundaries.

In their quest to form lasting relationships, young adults find it difficult to cut ties with their loved ones and family of heritage. Should they choose to do so carelessly they open themselves to isolation and abandonment from family members. This stage of life can be difficult at times, depending on the usual stressors between the young adult and his or her parents. During this phase, decision making can be very complicated for young adults. They may even make some bad decisions that they will later live to regret. Young adults who enjoy a good relationship with their parents may live at home until they become economically stable and get involved in intimate relationships. However, they remain subject to older family members' collective efforts to protect them from life's hardship. They are still understood to be "mommy's boy" and "daddy's girl," so to speak. For any young adult to live at home, it is understood that the roles are clearly defined, rules are consistent, and ultimate authority is clearly established. No matter what age one is, respect for parents and older persons is always the norm. If a young adult exhibits disrespectful behavior at home, he or she is at risk of compromising his or her freedom, and the behavior may eventually result in a separation between the parents and the young adult.

What often produces these conflicts between values in the family is a failure to communicate comprehensively with one another. Young adults, being adapted to a new culture, have also adopted a new worldview. They long for dialogue. This desire may be a risk if it becomes clear that bringing conflict to the surface may put the mother or the father in a position to explain their actions or even to apologize for mistakes. Therapists

should be interested to know from Haitian young adults about behavioral change and the long-term and short-term effects on them. In the Haitian home, a child is a child no matter how old he or she is or no matter his or her social status. Intermarriage has always been a pattern of Haitian life experience due to the fact that Haiti is a pluralistic society in terms of ethnicity, race, and religion. However, Sethelhare-Oagile argues that “racial and ethnic issues continue to interact with the family cycle at every stage of intermarriage” (2005, p. 32). When this is the case, inevitable conflicts occur. We often hear a Haitian spouse say to his or her non-Haitian spouse, “We don’t do that in our family” or “Things like that are unacceptable in our culture.” In order to remediate the welfare of their family, the couple often finds it useful to be tolerant toward one another. They come alongside of each other to cope with the difficult stress that they both experience as a result of cultural misunderstanding.

Acculturation Stress

Acculturation is the process by which one negotiates the dominant culture without losing one’s cultural identity. Acculturation is said to be “recognized as an important concept in explaining the varied experiences of ethnic and cultural minorities” (Belizaire, 2007, p. 24). Many Haitian parents who migrated from Haiti experience acculturation stress. Some of them find it difficult to learn, negotiate, and accommodate to a new set of beliefs and value system. The type and pace of change may throw them off their rhythm and create acculturation stress. What often creates a problem for Haitians who live outside of Haiti is the incompatibility between their culture of origin and that of the land that they now call home. They are required to adjust to the socioeconomic and cultural

mores of this new community. And sometimes these experiences are mediated by discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, social class, race, and age. Haitians continue to aspire to high moral values in the public domain. While immigrants, in particular Haitian immigrants, grieve the loss of community, friends, and personal networks, they also have the ability to settle in a new environment which they call home and have new friends whom they call family. In a way, migration forces the Haitian to connect with and adapt quickly to a new social structure that might be hostile to his or her culture of origin. It requires the reconstruction of a worldview in order to learn to appreciate the complex nature and dynamics of the new reality. Like other immigrant families, at the time of separation Haitians often grieve at the departure for a foreign land. They often do so in secret. For some, their grief has never stopped as long as they continue to be away from their family members. In the meantime, they also experience a sense of gratitude for being able to provide for their family. Once they are established in their new home, they quickly find ways to develop a new network of friends. They try their best to stay connected with other friends and relatives who might be near or far. As days, weeks, and months pass, they often develop new habits and a new perspective of life that may put them at odds with others in their family.

At times, unmet needs create conflict. As each partner turns to each other for help, a vicious cycle may create a strain in the relationship, and the damage they do to each other might be irreparable. If they are people who claim to live their lives on principle, they may be living together for the sake of other people and to the detriment of themselves. Haitians enter relationship with a sense that the partner must meet his or her needs.

Acculturative stress occurs when the adoptive culture contributes to a lot of psychological distress in one's daily life. Belizaire explains that one can experience acculturative stress upon contact between cultural groups, when conflicts emerge and the level of adaptation and stability seem to be out of one's reach (Belizaire, 2007, p. 26). For the Haitian, the lack of social support becomes a particular need that may create stress. The need to adapt to a culture that seems hostile to his or her worldview and ethnic association with groups that he or she would prefer not to associate with creates stress. Acculturative stress has been linked with some fatal experiences in the Haitian community. More research is needed to better understand the true nature of acculturative stress and how to cope with it.

Assimilation

Childrearing in a new culture is a challenge for Haitians. In this type of environment, the children are torn by conflicting social and cultural demands, while facing all kinds of challenges that children in general face as they mature. In general, Haitians do not have a problem with integrating to the mainstream culture. They advocate for one to maintain their own cultural values while incorporating the positive values of the adopted culture. Most Haitians oppose isolationist sentiment that is, avoiding interacting with the context of the daily life. In general, Haitians have issues with assimilating to the values and norms of the mainstream culture, such as portrayed by black American cultural forms of identity, the hip-hop culture in general.

While many Haitians of the older generation are fascinated with the political events in Haiti, the younger generation is more concerned with events in the United

States. A quiet tension continues to exist between the old and new generations. The old generation feels that the new generation of Haitians is inauthentic and insufficiently attuned to the traditions and politics of the homeland. The new generation wishes to break free from that mindset, the folkloric stereotype, to project a more modern, assimilated Haitian community. On their arrival from Haiti, children face an enormous amount of pressure. Assimilation is the process by which a person adopts a culture in such a way that he or she may lose one's own culture. Assimilation supposes a relationship between culture and one's identity. Its individualizing process causes a detachment from one's original culture to a foreign adopted culture. At this point, the inclusion that is created as a result of assimilation tends to eliminate the values of the primary culture in the profit of the newly adopted one. Haitian parents vehemently oppose assimilation and often experience many issues with children whom they left behind in Haiti at a very young age. This generation tends to leave their parents once they become young adults; they also tend to live in urban areas.

Assimilation takes place over many generations, and it often brings conflict in Haitians' inner circle because it questions values, belief systems, and worldview. These conflicts often lead to division among friends and families and may be irreconcilable. When older Haitians migrated to the United States, for example, they found it difficult to establish boundaries for their children, who seemed to embrace popular culture and reject Haitian culture. Thus the parents find themselves imposing rigid rules on their children that later cause division. Sometimes, problems arise due to language barriers between parents and children.

Appropriate Age for Marriage

Regardless of one's religious view of marriage, the young Haitian man must be about nineteen year old to consider marriage. The girl can be as young as fifteen years old. However, in this present day and age, no parents consider marrying their child before such child finishing college. Above all, the young man must be considered respectable in the community. He must own some valuable assets and or have achieved a good education. From dating and courtship to marriage, the man is expected to take the first steps. To insure proper procedures, the young girl, after being proposed to, would go home and inform her parents of the decision. The custom was that the parents would gather and discuss the plan for the marriage. Most of the time, the two families have known each other well. In cases where the male is not well known, the formal way to propose marriage to a woman was through *une lettre de demande* (a letter to request marriage) (Herskovits, 1937, pp. 139-250). This practice is almost eliminated in the psyche of the new generation.

Haitians marry by consensus. Many young men and women are said to be sexually active since their teenage years, but many parents encourage chastity among their children. Today, most young adults got married midway through college or after college. It is considered shameful, reprehensible, and unfortunate for a young girl to be found pregnant prior to marriage. In some cases, she will be put out of her home. In other cases, the parents of the boy who got sexually involved with her might take the girl to their home and care for her. Should the parents of the boy not approve of the girl, she may seek shelter at the home of an extended family member or friends of the family. The

newborn child would carry the last name of the father only if the father agreed to the relationship. If not, the child would bear the last name of the mother.

It continues to be an undeniable fact that lack of regulation in the sociocultural context is responsible for the decline in moral value in the Haitian milieu. As the people multiplied, the related customs of the colonial era prevailed. From the French colonial era, they learned to practice formal marriage to establish a family with social ambition, casual sexual relations for pleasure outside of marriage, and the claim of legitimate children to all property and illegitimate ones to nothing (Leyburn, 1941, p. 190). Both ideologies are reflected in the established law of the first two prominent and most influential leaders of the land: Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, respectively. “From among these alternatives Haiti made a choice which is an example of what Keller calls ‘automatic selection in the mores’” (1931, chaps. 4-5).

Since the pre-colonial era until this day, Haitians have learned to be family-oriented, to have a personal tie with the land of their ancestors, the importance of wealth to stabilize a union, and the significance and the insignificance of a wedding ceremony.

CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL TEACHING ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

Perceptions of Marriage and Family among Haitians

In the past, there were two ways in which a Haitian family might be formed. The first of these was through common-law relationships; the second was through religious marriage. Many Haitians attach a certain prestige to marriages performed in the church. To those who do so, marriage is sanctioned to be permanent. Marriage is often the result of consent on the part of a man and a woman. Since the nation's formative stage until now, religion shaped the Haitian mentality concerning marriage and family. Religion is one facet of communal life that reflects the history of marriage and family. A Haitian's perception of marriage might be a reflection of his or her theology. Vodou was the religion of some of the slaves (Heaven, 2003, pp. 262-263). Just as Christianity plays a major role in decision making about marriage and family, so Vodou plays a big role in some Haitian families.

Before marriage, a Vodou believer would perform the necessary rites for his or her gods before the actual marriage ceremony. "If they are devotees of deities such as Damballa, Erzilie, Ogon, or Aida Wedo, all of whom are known to be extremely jealous" (Herskovits, 1937, p. 139), the Vodou believer would present offering in honor of the god or gods to whom the family is subservient. In Vodou rituals, the god may object to a particular marriage of his servant. In principle, prior to a couple's union, the Vodou devotee would be asked to marry his or her god before engaging in a marital vow with a human lover. At times, a couple might be married because the god has ordered him or her

to do so to preserve the family tied with the god. According to Métraux, “A Voodooist who simply wishes to put himself under the protection of a god can make a formal proposal of marriage” (Métraux, 1972, p. 212). This marital vow is deemed to be indissoluble. In Vodou, marriage is a legal bond between the god and the devotee. One’s life would be in peril if one is found to be unfaithful in fulfilling the marital vow to the god.

The marital ceremony is sealed with the exchange of finger rings between the god, who is represented by a godfather or a godmother, and the devotee. The ring is a sign of dependence and reliance on each other. “The marriage entails obligations and responsibilities, that is, the god will watch over his or her spouse and in return the spouse must give presents to the god” (Métraux, 1972, p. 213). The spouse must set apart a night in which he or she will have a sexual encounter with the god. Failure to do so may result in severe consequences, which may even lead to death. A Vodou priest (*houngan*) performs the ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, the priest reads a text that is considered a marriage certificate that authenticates the legality of the marriage between the god and the human devotee (see Appendix 2).

Marriage and Family: Goals and Purposes

For Christians, marriage is an institution created by God by which a man leaves his family to cleave to his wife. The couple receives the approbation of God. They unite their hearts and minds through a lifelong promise to love each other in good times as well as in bad times. They commit themselves to forsake all other pleasures for the sake of each other. They own all in common. They promise to be with one another for better or

for worse, until death do them part. Both Catholic and Protestant churches hold the view that divorce is impossible. The church teaches that marriage is a religious, sacred act, and not a civil act. The church argues that marriage is from God. Marriage is the institution through which a male and a female intimately vow their heartfelt allegiance to one another. Marriage is indissoluble. It is meant to be permanent.

God is the primary mover in love. Marriage is a reflection of God's character. We love in the manner that God loves. God's love is unconditional. It initiates action. It is proven not in empty words but in deeds (1 John 3:18). All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version. God's love leads to sacrifice (Ephesians 5). God's love involves forgiveness. God's love involves complete acceptance. God's love is a commitment. God's love leads us to joyful praise. When the husband and the wife are committed to love each other as God loves them, their love will endure. They will be kind to one another. They will learn to bear all things for each other's sake (1 Corinthians 13). They will believe in each other, endure hardship together, and suffer with one another while hoping for a better future. It is only through this kind of commitment that a married couple will have the energy and interest to love one another for life.

The Man and the Woman Become One Flesh

The feeling leading to dating and courtship begins like a mystery. "There are three things that are too amazing for me, the way of a man with a maiden" (Proverbs 30:19). Theories of attraction claim that people are attracted to other people for entirely different reasons. Due to the fact that sexuality and inner beauty are immeasurable by attraction,

thus go the old sayings: like attracts like, and opposites attract. Some people may contend that the ones who are similar attract each other because they share the same value system.

Nonetheless, no matter what the theory is, the way of a man with a maiden remains a mystery. Proverbs 30:19 points to a sentiment that is strong enough to form a bond. The focus is on marriage. The way a young woman gives her love to a young man or how the two of them fall in love is a mystery. The love of a man for a woman and vice versa is part of God's creative plan and therefore can be enjoyed and appreciated without fully comprehending it.

Equally mysterious is how two people can find their attraction and create a bond but then later distort the sacredness of their relationship (Proverbs 30:20). The mystery of human attraction may create a level of uncertainty. But this uncertainty may not be the result of the complexity of the unknown or the unpredictable. It could be the result of a lack of commitment and loyalty to the demands that the mystery of attraction creates. Indeed, we are sinners, and as such, we may easily dismiss a vow even if it is to our peril. Many people profess loyalty at the time of their mysterious findings, but a faithful person who can find (Proverbs 20:7)? The righteous person behaves with integrity. The marriage vow is a vow of loyalty (unfailing love) and faithfulness, both desirable qualities in a relationship that lasts forever (see Proverbs 3:3; 19:22). But not everyone who claims to have those qualities does.

The third mystery is when one sees or hears about an unloved man or woman getting married (Proverbs 30:23). Whether the mystery of the relation is difficult or easy, the individual who cannot love may find a way to destroy the bond of marriage. Sexuality expresses relationship. The whole system of human procreation rests solely upon sexual

acts. Sexuality should limit itself to marriage (Hebrews 13:4). The context of marital union is the locus of sexuality. It is the act that consummates marriage as an honorable and a sacred act. Sexuality is an act upon one's body. Thus, to engage in sexual expression outside of God's established norms, that is, marriage, is to desecrate one's body. In Christian perspective, the body is a person's way of being in relation to others. Sexuality expresses union. Marriage is a union whose empirical authenticity is sex. It cannot be profaned.

Marriage is a Covenant

Marriage is a covenant of brotherhood that cannot be broken with impunity. A covenant of brotherhood refers to an agreement made between groups or individuals and is understood as being sacred and unbreakable. It is a compact sealed by loyalty to God and to the promised individual (see, e.g., 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:8, 12-17, 42). Breaking a covenant is breaking a union with God, because God is the author and the prime witness (Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 29:24; Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15) of a covenantal relationship (Malachi 2:14). One can understand why God had forbidden the Israelites to make treaties or enter into covenant relationship with the Canaanites, because covenant relationship involves risk and implies accountability (Deuteronomy 7:2). At the heart of the exchange, God is being called as a witness. In marriage, God is the first witness (Malachi 2:14). Marriage is sealed with a vow with God as a witness. Since marriage is created by God, we can deduce that when a man enters into marriage with a woman, both people enter into a covenant relationship with God (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah

3:14; 2 Corinthians 11:2; see also Isaiah 1:21; Ezekiel 16:22; Matthew 9:15; John 3:29; Revelation 2:22; 19:7).

A study of covenant relationship between God and his people reveals the following truth. First, one cannot break a covenant with impunity. In the marital covenant, the man and woman make a vow to each other for better or for worse, but to keep. This promise is made in the presence of the invisible God in the assembly of his servants. It is the presence of God that seals the vow. A vow is a bond. In every case, we are bound irretrievably to keep our word, unless there is an ethical issue that requires one to retreat from a previous vow (see Ecclesiastes 5:4-5). One ought to keep a vow even if it seems to be detrimental to oneself.

How does God react when the covenant of brotherhood is broken? God demands accountability. Hear what the prophet Amos had to say: “For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath” (Amos 1:9). The sin is that Tyre sold whole communities of Israelites captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood. This statement expresses God’s determination to hold the people of Tyre and Edom accountable for their rebellious acts. God’s anger will not turn back; he will carry out his decree and punish the nation for its great sinfulness. Notice that the one transgression for which God says he will turn his wrath against Tyre is the breach of treaty obligations; Tyre broke the brotherly covenant that was established between Solomon and Hiram king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:12). They did so by mistreating God’s people. In this context, God’s mandate to Noah (Genesis 9:5-7) is probably in view. Hence, breaking a covenant of brotherhood causes anger, personal vengeance, and hatred in one’s heart. Every time a covenant is broken between two people, anger, hatred, and fury arise.

Malachi presents marriage to one's companion (spouse) in terms of a covenant of brotherhood. The wife is a lifelong companion with whom a man joins in unity. This kind of bond is permanent (Hugenberger, 1994; Balswick & Balswick, 1991; see also Walsh, 2003). One cannot break the bond without causing major damage. When the prophet Malachi wanted to call attention to the seriousness of breaching a vow, he said,

Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another? Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty? Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. (Malachi 2:10-16)

The seriousness of vows and the understanding that marriage is indissoluble are reinforced in Matthew 19:10-12, Deuteronomy 23:22-23, and Proverbs 20:25 (see Ben Sira 18:22). The warnings are against the reckless attitude that many people tend to have with regard to marriage. Rather than make vows recklessly, it is best not to make a vow at all, thus saving oneself from possible misfortune (Deuteronomy 23:21-23). First and foremost, the covenant relationship between God and people is based on “God’s love” (Deuteronomy 4:37-38). And God promised to keep his part of the covenant he had made with humankind (Deuteronomy 9:5). In the ancient world, the oath of a covenant made in the framework of a ritual ceremony was sacred. The punishment for violating the oath was a great curse (see Revelation 5:34ff.). The marital covenant holds the same formulation as the priestly covenant that God made with Abraham, in which God promised to be the God of Abraham and his descendants and they would be God’s people (Genesis 17:7-8). The terminology is connected with marriage and adoption. In its original setting, the promise is made unconditionally to those who are loyal and willing to fulfill their obligations and duties before God and consequently to one another. Similarly, marriage is sealed with an oath in the presence of God. The covenant of promise in the marital relationship is unconditional and assumes eternal loyalty. “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matthew 19:6b).

“Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?”

According to the prophet Malachi (Malachi 2:10-16), divorce is an abomination to the Lord. Divorce profanes the covenant, breaks faith with one another, and is detestable to God. Divorce “desecrates the sanctuary the LORD loves.” To avoid desecration in

marriage, God condemns unequal yoking, “marrying the daughter of a foreign god.” The expression may refer to a goddess. In Ezra 10:2 and Nehemiah 13:26, the expression is “strange wives.” She is a “strange wife” because of her spiritual association. She belongs to a different god, as opposed to the real God, the God of Israel. In Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah the issue was not about a foreigner, even though a non-Jew was a foreigner. The issue was about interfaith marriage, or what the apostle Paul called being unequally yoked. Believers may only marry believers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). The injunction “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14) is an agricultural metaphor that calls up the mental image of an ox and a donkey being harnessed together in a double yoke (Deuteronomy 22:10). No believer is to be mismated with an unbeliever. When believers and unbelievers yoke together, their union profanes the sanctity of God’s altar. The union leads the believer to idolatry (in the Septuagint, “and has gone after other gods”) and perhaps worship of Astarte. According to Malachi, when Judah marries “the daughter of a foreign god,” Judah has done a detestable thing. Morally speaking, Judah’s act is wickedness. The phrase “Judah has committed a detestable thing” is used to express how being unequally yoked with a nonbeliever compromises the believer’s values, goals, standards, and motivations. The values of a believer are not only incompatible with those of an unbeliever, but also they are diametrically opposed to each other (see also Sethlhare-Oagile, 2005, p. 30). The act is deceitful and a transgression. God calls the act an “abomination.” Something is an abomination to the Lord when it is in connection with moral, religious, and cultic interdictions.

In Malachi 2:14, we read, “It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is

your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.” In this text we see Malachi pleading the case for marriage as a covenant of brotherhood. Amos 1:9-10 and Obadiah 1:10-15 speak clearly about the nature and character of such a covenant. First, this covenant underlines the obligations that one has to common humanity. The principles that arise from biblical examples of relationship, such as David and Jonathan, offer a basic understanding with regard to an ethical standard of living. Within the human family as a whole, there are some to whom we bear a closer relationship: this may be a relationship deliberately formed and sealed with a compact (Amos 1:9), for example, a marriage; or a relationship inherited by blood (Amos 1:11); or one that is sealed by faith, for example, being a Christian. With this perspective in mind, Amos brings us to one important principle that applies to all relationships: the inviolability of the pledged word. For anyone to violate all rights and privileges that pertain to a relationship creates an ethical dilemma, which God condemns.

In Deuteronomy 24, Moses discussed the issue of divorce and remarriage. The Pharisees asked, “Why then did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” (Matthew 19:7). In response to that question, Jesus explains the purpose of the law to the Pharisees: first, “Moses permitted you,” not commanded you. The verb “to permit” or “to allow” suggests the concept of a concession. Second, Jesus says that “it was due to the hardness of your heart that Moses permitted you to divorce your wife.” Paul offers the concept of “reconciliation” for those who were married and then separated. But one would never reconcile with one another if the heart is hardened. So divorce is the result of the hardness of the heart. In so saying, Moses

permitted divorce as a concession to remediate a bad situation. In this case, he also permitted remarriage.

But Moses also said that the divorced woman was defiled. Why is the woman unclean after her second marriage? The word *defiled* or *unclean* is said to refer to infidelity. The greatest uncleanness was idolatry, which defiled the temple and the land. The woman was unclean under the same principle that God has declared Israel “defiled” or “unclean” after it had gone after other gods (Ezekiel 22:4; cf. 14:11; 36:25; 37:23). The act of defilement constitutes a deceit and misrepresentation of marriage. Remarrying a woman whom one had divorced after discovering an indecency in her (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) constitutes, in essence, a lack of integrity and a hypocritical attitude toward marriage (Weinfeld, 1992). Moses says that the woman is defiled due to the illicit relationship, which may have occurred in divorce or deliberate adultery. What one needs to understand is that Moses was not giving guidance or prescription for divorce in general. In Moses’ time, divorce was clearly an institution by means of which injustices against women were perpetrated. But Moses affirms marriage and modesty to be preserved between men and women. This part of the prohibition given by Moses is said to be one of the prohibitions that the Israelites understood to be not good (Ezekiel 20:25), that is, this piece of legislation was not absolutely good but only relatively good. It was a proverbial law as opposed to a universal and perpetual law. It was given as a prohibition in case of violation, as Paul says in Romans 5:20, when he explains that “the law was added so that the trespass might increase.”

In Matthew, Jesus explains that there is an obvious distinction in the case of infidelity. But Jesus wants at the same time to preserve the bond of the relationship by

allowing no excuse for a new marriage. Infidelity of any kind in a relationship affects the fundamental unity of the covenant. This unity is actualized in accordance to creation. This image is preserved even when one is forced to legally distance himself or herself from the relationship. Divorce from a legal standpoint permits another union, but from a biblical standpoint it does not. That is why the Old Testament clearly explains that the Lord is in the business of strengthening relationships (Hosea; Malachi). “He repudiates divorce.”

According to 1 Corinthians 5:1 and 1 Corinthians 6:9, the first-century world perceived the command about marital fidelity as an unconditional divine command. That is why people understood marriage and adultery not as matters of civil law but as matters of the holy will of God (1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 6:18). Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage opposes the concession of the law that seeks to prohibit a woman’s remarriage to her first husband after being defiled by a second husband. As indicated in Matthew 19:3-4, Jesus bases his teaching on the intent of the law, namely, Genesis 2:24 as opposed to its concession. In so doing, Jesus provides to his hearers a scriptural hermeneutic, that is, how the law should be read and understood. The intent of the law (Genesis 2:24) is to provide guidance in case of treachery or violation in human relationship. Jesus says that Moses provided for divorce as a concession to people’s hardheartedness, but divorce is not part of God’s original plan. Marriage actualizes the idea of creation, the fact that men and women bear the image of God (Matthew 5:32; 19:8). On this fact, Jesus rejects the provision of divorce. According to Jesus, the remarriage of the divorced person is tantamount to adultery (Mark 10:9-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 39; Romans 7:1-3). Matthew reports Jesus’ teaching about the

new ethos of adultery (Matthew 5:27). It is the heart of that decision. If the idea of the marriage bond is abandoned in the heart, the marriage is broken. The marriage is broken when the promise that was made in the ceremony “to love, to cherish, in good health and in sickness, for better or for worse” is broken. The true meaning of fidelity is proven only when two individuals honor the commitment that they made for life. When they promise to remain inwardly and outwardly one, the promise must be kept. Jesus further explains the teaching of Moses: “It was because your hearts were hard.” It was not God’s intent from the beginning (Mark 10:5-6).

The question about the legality of divorce is based on writings found in the Book of the Covenant and the Priestly Code. But both books bear lines of argument that provide a fuller understanding than the Wisdom books, which praise conjugal fidelity (Proverbs 5:15-19; Ecclesiastes 9:9). When the Pharisees ask Jesus, “Is it lawful,” this must not be understood as whether divorce was prescribed in the Law of Moses. The Old Testament perceives marriage to be a covenant in itself. The book of Hosea is based on this perspective. There was a written contract for marriage; that is why a written document was required in case of a divorce. Therefore cohabitation without contractual vows was not marriage. Old Testament people knew that they were not free to divorce their spouse on the same ground that they were not free to engage in extramarital or premarital sex. Moses made it clear that if the first husband remarries the divorced wife, it was an “abomination to the Lord.”

The Jews’ inquiry was not on the issue of divine rights or legal human right, for they had already concluded that as priests, teachers of the law, they had a divine mandate and legal standing to do what they did. They wanted to know whether or not Jesus would

substantiate what had become current practice (Matthew 15:26; 20:15; Mark 12:14; Acts 8:37; 2 Corinthians 12:4). Jesus says that marriage is between one man and one woman; being united for life is God's intent for marriage. Those who came to question Jesus did not want to address the psychosocial dilemma caused by problems in relationships; they wanted to know to what school of thought Jesus belonged. The question did not address the Law of Moses, according to the Deuteronomic school of thought. The conversation is rather Midrash, a form of dialogue that states "let our master teach us." Although they were malicious in their inquiry, they desired to know, "Is it lawful in your view for a man to divorce his wife?" One must remember the political developments of the time. Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.2) told us that Salome, a daughter of Herodias, sent a bill of divorce to her husband and thus dissolved her marriage with him (see Appendix 3). This was not the custom of the Jews. Josephus contends that on that account Herod killed John the Baptist, "who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.2).

It is enlightening to see that Matthew and Mark have the same perspective about marriage. In fact, the account in Matthew 19 is essentially the same as the account in Mark 10. For Mark, the didactic ministry of Jesus is of considerable importance, whereas for Matthew, the prophetic ministry is much more in view. Since Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, his teaching on the issue of marital relationship is final. Matthew and Mark approach the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage from the standpoint of the sociocultural controversy of the time. In Mark 10:2, the debate is about divorce in general, whereas in Matthew 19:3, the dispute is about divorce for "every cause." There

is also a second difference between the two texts. Mark 10:11 reads, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her,” but in Matthew 19:9 the phrase “against her” does not appear. Matthew contends simply that “anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Matthew chose not to include a statement we find in Mark 10:12, “And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” Mark talks about the woman divorcing her husband, which is out of the ordinary. Matthew says nothing about this. A grammatical study of the exception clause leads us to conclude the following possible interpretation. The focus should be on the adverb “except,” which can be interpreted as “not,” “not even,” “not only,” or “but even,” “in addition to” or “outside of.” The distinction between Matthew and Mark is pedagogical, not exegetical, since the meaning of the text remains. Jesus said that a person who divorces and then marries someone else commits adultery. The exception clause has to do with the issue of a rightful decision to divorce, since that was what the question was about. But Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19 is consistent with Matthew 5:32. Jesus holds man and woman liable for adultery if he or she divorces his or her faithful spouse and then marries someone else. The exception clause is not a provision for remarriage but for divorce. Second, according to Matthew 5, a person does not sin if the other partner has been sexually promiscuous, but remarriage is still adultery. If a man commits adultery, the same law applies for all believers (see Mark 10:1-12; Luke 11). If a man or a woman marries after divorce, he or she has committed adultery. Whoever marries a divorcee becomes one flesh (1 Corinthians 6:16). The issue is about the putting away of one’s spouse and the danger that pertains to it. What is the danger? A woman

will become an adulteress; the act of divorcing her will cause her to stumble. How could she be exposed to adultery? She will be perhaps involved in a new relationship with another man. Divorce does not eliminate the marriage vow.

“For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man” (Romans 7:2-3). According to this text, by having a relationship with someone else, she commits adultery. If she were to remarry, it is an act of adultery, because her husband is still living. Marriage cannot be broken, but separation is possible. If she remains celibate, she has not committed adultery. Adultery has to do with a sexual relationship with someone other than one’s spouse. Paul, echoing the teaching of Jesus, said that if a person marries, he or she is to stay married. If a person cannot tolerate certain vices and decides to separate, he or she must remain celibate. If a person cannot do that, he or she is to reconcile with the spouse.

In this case, Paul was not answering the question of defilement. The defilement is spiritual and toward God. If God forgives a person under the law of the new covenant, a spouse ought to forgive. All sins are forgivable. If so, people can reconcile with one another. That is the new covenant, the new provision that Jesus made by shedding his blood. Many people use legal ground as a cover for selfishness and hatred. By using the legal means, they pretend to be righteous. But Jesus is saying that if one divorces his spouse, he is responsible for making him or her adulterer or adulteress (unless the person has already done so by being sexually promiscuous). The line of argument on Jesus’ part

is that a man would leave his parents to cleave to his wife. They have become one flesh, and it is not possible to separate what has become one flesh unless one partner dies. Jesus explains the mystery of one flesh—two bodies become one body. To do away with a marriage is to kill the being. In this case, the implication is that a person who kills a marriage is a murderer. God created this organic union of the two sexes, and when they are cut apart, their heart, which was firmly bonded, will be cut. In doing so, one kills a new life that was one.

Perspectives of Marriage and Family from the Book of Hosea

In evaluating the message of Hosea, we find one of the major themes is an emphasis on a proper relationship between faith and ethics. The people of Israel and Judah had played the harlot (Amos 5:2; Hosea 4:12; 5:7; 9:1; 11:7; 13:16; Isaiah 1:21). Furthermore, the people had not treated their fellow man as they should have. Specifically, God had looked for justice (*mishpat*) among them and found bloodshed (*mishpah*); for righteousness (*tsedekah*) and a cry (*tseakah*) (Isaiah 5:7). The cry had been that of the poor (as noted in Malachi 2), the orphaned, the widowed, and the strangers. Transgression after transgression (Amos 2:6) made the judgment of God inevitable. At the same time, each prophet preached the possibility of hope if there were changes (Amos 9:11-15; Hosea 2:19-20; 14:4; Isaiah 33:14-15; Micah 5:2). In the prophetic messages, we see God's plea for righteousness above ritual. It is clearly understood that to the ordinary Israelite, sin was a neglect of the ritual regulations; to the prophets, it was a violation of the moral law of God. The rites and ceremonies of the people were not expressions of genuine worship but were substitutes for moral living. Worship was a means to an end but not an end in itself. The

reality of worship was ethical results in the lives of the people. Righteousness comes before rituals (cf. Amos 5:21-24; Isaiah 1:11-17; Micah 6:6-8).

At the beginning of his ministry, Hosea was instructed by God to marry Gomer, “an adulterous wife,” who would then bear to him “children of unfaithfulness” (Hosea 1:2). God used Hosea’s marriage to illustrate Israel’s sin. Israel had committed open adultery with other gods. In order that he might fulfill God’s command, Hosea married Gomer (Hosea 1:3). She bore him a son whom they named Jezreel, meaning “God scatters.” Gomer then had a daughter, who was called Lo-Ruhamah, “not pitied,” showing that God would no longer pity Israel (Hosea 1:6-7). Finally, Gomer had a second son, Lo-Ammi, which means either “not my people” or “illegitimate.” Israel had acted as if they were not people of the Lord. As a result, they have invited the judgment of God. But some day God would restore them after their humiliation. The phrase “bore him a son” is not used to describe the fact that the third child was named “illegitimate” or “not my people.” Rather, it suggests that the son (and perhaps the daughter) was from a relationship Gomer had with another man. This seems to be supported by Hosea 2, which consists of comments made by two spurned husbands: Hosea and God. We see Hosea is speaking to Gomer’s children regarding the fact that their mother had “conceived them in disgrace” (Hosea 2:5). This accusation is tied to the fact that God claims that Israel has been involved in a love affair with other gods; despite all the good care she has received from her husband (Hosea 2:8-13). Hence, God will punish her for her indecent act of adultery (Hosea 2:21-23).

Hosea fully understood how his marriage fit into his ministry. It becomes evident in the text that Hosea’s main concern was not with political disorder or social and economic evils, as was the case for Amos. Hosea penetrates to the heart of Israel’s problem: the

broken covenant. The source of all evil in Israel was the dissolution of that sacred bond upon which the nation was founded. Cut apart from God, Israel was no longer capable of faithfulness and steadfast love. As a result, it became “among the nations like a worthless thing” (Hosea 8:8).

In Hosea, marriage is a covenant that is based on a promise of faithfulness. God was faithful to Israel, and this fact is seen in Hosea’s faithfulness to Gomer. Faithfulness of God is defined as that which exhibits God’s character as worthy of the love. He will certainly fulfill his promises, as well as execute his threats against sin. It is also said that the faithfulness of God means that one can place complete confidence in him. Hosea’s faithfulness to Gomer is a proof of God’s faithfulness to Israel. Like Gomer, however, Israel has a history of disloyalty to her faithful partner. She turns away from his commandments and worships idols. Throughout the relationship, Hosea demonstrates how God remained faithful to Israel. The marriage between Hosea and Gomer is, indeed, an act of obedience to God.

Scholars disagree about the phrase “an adulterous wife” (Mays, 1969, p. 26). For some Old Testament scholars, Gomer was a prostitute prior to the time Hosea courted her. This assumption is based on the fact that the Lord commanded Hosea to take an adulterous wife. Mays argues that Gomer could not have been simply a woman of unknown promiscuous tendencies because that would not serve the purpose of God’s instruction to Hosea. He contends that a common prostitute would satisfy God’s command. The expression “go take” in reference to a woman seems to support Mays’s point of view. T. E. McComiskey argues that the command “go, take a harlot” does connote the idea of taking a woman of fornication (1992, pp. 13-15). She could be either

married or unmarried. He also argues that the verb “to take” governs both the woman of fornication and the children of fornication (in this case the verb denotes adoption). So McComiskey concludes that Hosea will marry and at the same time adopt children of a sexually promiscuous woman. It appears to be illogical for Hosea to follow the instruction of God to go after a woman with immoral tendencies. Hosea is to marry (to take) for his wife a prostitute (*zànà*). D. A. Garrett explains that Hosea, in obedience to God’s command, took an immoral woman by the name of Gomer (1997, pp. 50-54). He asserts that the term *promiscuous* means that Gomer was a prostitute or simply immoral. The word does not imply what she might do later on. Hosea is describing her current state; she is “a promiscuous woman.”

However, other scholars contend that the expression is an anticipation of what Gomer would become. Wolff argues that the term refers to young women in general who were ready for marriage (1974, p. 15). He asserts that Gomer is simply representative of her contemporaries in Israel. Macintosh claims that the expression “an adulterous woman” characterizes a behavior that would later be capitalized (1997, p. 8). He writes that Hosea alludes to the subsequent rather than to the present behavior of Gomer. The first argument can be validated if one interprets the word *zànà* or *zônâ* literally. Hence the word means “promiscuous.” Furthermore, the Lord indicates to Hosea what he ought to do: “take a promiscuous woman.” He did not intend to say she will become promiscuous or a harlot. However, the second argument can also be valid if one tends to explain the meaning of the text from its context. Since what we have in the book of Hosea is an object lesson, one must see that Hosea is using metaphoric language. In other words, Gomer was truly a young virgin who enters into a marriage relationship with Hosea, who

symbolized God. Prior to the covenant relationship, Israel was pure (Hosea 2:15), but she corrupted herself by going after other gods. No matter what the state of Gomer was at the time of the marriage, her subsequent unfaithfulness was enough to satisfy the intended symbolism. Taking this into account, the children born to Hosea are not necessarily illegitimate children. Therefore, the contention of McComiskey that Hosea adopted the children is incorrect. The expression “children of unfaithfulness” must be understood with the context of the book of Hosea. Gomer was a harlot and therefore unfaithful to her husband. Thus, the expression “children of unfaithfulness” should be understood as children born to an unfaithful mother. Scholars who follow the footsteps of McComiskey argue that the children are illegitimate due to the names that they have received. The text indicates that Jezreel is born to Hosea, but this terminology is not used for the two others. The critic rests upon the significance of the names given to these children: “Lo-Ruhamah (I will show no mercy, Hosea 2:6) and Lo-Ammi (you are not my people, Hosea 2:7). But what this critic fails to understand is the significance of the name within the context. The names are expressions of God’s dissatisfaction of the type of life that the people were living. God declares that he will judge his people for their unfaithfulness. We know this to be true because later, Hosea said they are called Lo-Ammi, but in the future they will be called “sons of the living God” (Hosea 2:1). Due to Gomer’s unfaithfulness (metaphorically Israel’s unfaithfulness), Hosea (metaphorically the Lord) has threatened to disown the children. He also threatened to strip Gomer (Israel) naked (Hosea 2:3; see Garrett, 1997, p. 57). He said he will not have mercy upon them (Hosea 2:4; see Hubbard, 1989, p. 63), but yet, he will show mercy to them. They will be called once again “children of the living God” (Hosea 1:11). God was under no obligation to accept the

adulterous children as his children, but because of his loving-kindness he accepts them. We see that in Hosea, God has been dishonored in his official character by his wife, Israel. Nonetheless, his manifest glory and goodness have never changed. God's faithfulness can be closely linked to his immutability, his unchangeable character. He remains true to his word because it is not his character to change. His word, being the expression of his steadfast character, stands without variation.

The discussion can be validated when one takes into consideration the reason behind the significance of the second and the third child of Gomer. As we discussed above, the names of the children denote the discontentment of God regarding Israel's lifestyle. The children's names express the reason why the Lord is going to judge his people. In Hosea 2:2-13, the prophet explains that the Lord would withdraw compassion for the Northern Kingdom but would continue to display love for the Southern Kingdom (Hosea 2:7). Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi are children who foreshadow judgments to come. It was the custom in the ancient Near East that when a wife revealed herself unworthy of the love of her husband, she automatically would be rejected by her husband; she was defiled (Stuart, 1987, p. 51). Thus, the names of these children prove that Gomer (Israel) had defiled herself and that Hosea (God) was no longer obligated to feed and clothe her. The idea was that a woman who humiliated her husband would be cast out with no means of support. That is why the Lord says by decree that he would strip his wife naked (Hosea 2:3) and disown her children (Hosea 2:4).

In Hosea 2:2, the children are exhorted to rebuke their mother. It must be understood that their mother in this case is the land. Chisholm says that she can be viewed as the mother of the future children of the land. So the instruction is for the

children to plead against their mother's offensive behavior. But in Hosea 2:11 we see that though the Lord would punish his wife for her unfaithfulness, he would not reject her forever. To fulfill the Davidic covenant, Israel and Judah will reunite under the leadership of one king (Hosea 3:5). The Lord will reinstate them in their land (Hosea 2:14-23).

Hosea (the Lord) exhorted Gomer (Israel) to put away her unfaithfulness and her adultery. The Lord threatened to remove her fertility. The expression may refer to her legal marital rights. However, despite all the threats, the Lord was not ready to let his adulterous wife go. As a result, the Lord will corner her in order to force her to submit to his will. The Lord will speak seductively and romantically to his wife to convince her to stay home. Eventually, she will respond to the love of her husband (Hosea 2:16). Then the Lord will provide a shelter for her. Israel will recognize the lordship of God and submit to it. The Lord uses an agricultural image to describe the restoration process. He says, "I will plant her." The language indicates that she will take root in the land and produce fruit. When God sows, the result is obviously fascinating. Once again Israel will be restored; God will say, "You are my people and she will say you are my God" (Hosea 1:11).

In Hosea 3:1-5, the prophet explains how the Lord instructed him to retrieve his wife. Scholars disagree concerning the identity of the wife. For some, the wife is none other than Gomer. Mays argues that Hosea 3:1 is a continuity of the dramatic relation between God and Israel. He says that the woman that Hosea is to love is to be a wife who has given herself to the love of another and so is an adulteress (Mays, 1969, pp. 54-57). He concludes that the symbolism is best served if the woman is Gomer. The context seems to support that claim. It makes sense to argue that the wife who left is Gomer (the

image of Israel) and that Hosea is playing the role of the Lord in going after her (Hosea 3:3-5). Macintosh (1997, p. 96) argues that Hosea 3:1 may be an emendation from the compiler to create similarities between Hosea 1 and Hosea 3. Hosea is commanded to love the adulterous woman as the Lord would love the adulterous wife Israel (Hosea 3:3-4). Critics who argue that the wife is other than Gomer do so on the basis of Hosea 3:1, “go once again.” The claim is that the expression here denotes a woman who is already in adultery. The text does not say anything specific about Gomer at this point. She is certainly not at home, and it is unlikely she would tolerate the presence of another woman in her home. We have no account of a divorce at this point. The woman is referred to as an “adulterous” woman; that is, she is still married to her husband. Chisholm says that the term refers to Gomer’s “former husband” (Chisholm, 1998). But we do not have any evidence that Gomer had had any former husband. Thus, contextually the text supports the idea that Gomer is the woman Hosea is to go after. Perhaps she had left the house in order to prostitute herself. The Lord commanded Hosea to go after her, just as the Lord would go after Israel, who prostitutes herself by going after other gods.

But Hosea 3:2 tells us that Hosea paid a price to an unknown individual to claim the woman for himself. The woman could have been a slave or a temple prostitute. Since we argue that the woman is Gomer, it is possible that she could have remarried, because the literal meaning of Hosea 3:4 is that Hosea asked her to remain pure without prostituting herself. This expression implies that she had perhaps left and went to another man and become that man’s possession. As a result, Hosea must pay a price to own her now. It is also apparent that the expression denotes a legal term. Hence, Hosea earned the legal right to be her husband. It may be that Hosea had to wait for a certain time after he

purchased her for all legal matters to clear before he could remarry her. But while she is in the process of waiting for Hosea to fulfill the final mandate (whatever it might be), Hosea also committed himself to take good care of her.

According to Hosea, God's knowledge of Israel was complete and perfect. He knows that Israel will rebel and will have to be chastised. Hosea proves that the ultimate plan of God and blessing for Israel has not changed (Hosea 4:6-11). The unfaithfulness of Israel has now been proven. She no longer recognized the authority of God, nor is she any more committed to the Lord. The Lord says Israel has not acknowledged him. The expression "acknowledgment of the Lord" denotes lack of recognition for the authority of the Lord. Thus, the judgment of the Lord will be severe for Israel (Hosea 6:4). The Lord calls the Israelites to attention by pronouncing a judgment speech against their adultery (Hosea 6:10-14). The Lord sees the sins of Israel as being an element that will destroy the later generation (cf. Jeremiah 22:26). The people participated in cult prostitution and thus frustrated the Lord. Thus, God's suit is based on the unfaithfulness of Israel as well as her lack of devotion or loyalty to the Lord, her husband. We read a pattern of accusation that the Lord made against Israel and its priests (Hosea 6:4-5, 8-10). The people reject God's revelation. In verse 2 Hosea uses the word *parats*, meaning "break out," to describe how the Israelites have failed to follow the Lord. They broke out of the relationship. In verse 10 Hosea says that will not happen again after they are restored (Macintosh, 1997, p. 129b; Garrett, 1997, p. 112). However, Macintosh and others forcefully argue that the word denotes "lying deception perpetrated to cheat and defraud" as opposed to break out.

The sin of Israel is exposed. The deeds of the people could not be hidden from God's sight (Psalm 69:6). Hosea is using purely metaphorical language to depict what

happen when a wife is unfaithful to her husband. One may contend that the verse could also be an allusion to cultic activity (Hosea 4:13-15). Wolff says that God did not deceive himself by the alluring means used by the leaders of Israel (1974, p. 99). In Hosea 7:13, the people rebelled against the Lord. They gathered together for grain and new wine festivals. The expression is very difficult to solve morphologically as well as contextually because of the confusion of *the resh* and *the daleth* in the Hebrew word for “attack or be afraid.” He explains that the root of this verb does not explain a lexical nuance that fits the context of Hosea 7:14. Hence, Hosea is talking about the lack of trust that the people placed in God for food and good harvest. Instead, they trusted Baal to ensure their crops (see 1 Kings. 18:28; see Chisholm, 1998, p. 21-22).

In verse 15 Hosea used a military metaphor to express the nature of the Israelites’ faith. He wants to denounce their lack of perseverance. He says that the people as well as their leader will fall into the hands of their enemies. The Hebrew word for “know” or “knowledge” (in Hosea 6:6) is *yada*. It is also the word used of sexual relation between a man and a woman (a husband and a wife; see Genesis 4:1), the most intimate experience that is humanly possible. And Israel had failed to show love for her husband. She had prostituted herself by going after other lovers; and so Hosea declared for God, “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). It was a twofold rebuke! Hosea blasted the prophets and priests because of the situation: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6; and see 6:6). It was the task of the prophets and priests to instruct the people in the knowledge of God and to guide them in God’s ways. The priests’ first duty was not to sacrifice but to instruct, and they had failed at that. Like Amos and Jeremiah, Hosea insisted that God did not ask sacrifices of Israel; what he required was

“mercy” and “acknowledgment of God” (Hosea 6:6). And yet in these primary responsibilities the leaders had failed, and thus in these two areas the people had failed.

It is evident that Hosea proves that holiness is the rule of all God’s actions. Because God is holy, it becomes imperative that Israel must be holy. That is, she is to be blameless in her relationship with the Lord. But we see that Israel’s descent into sin continues to be described as adultery through Hosea 10. Yet, despite Israel’s covenant breaking, God continues to love the people (Hosea 11:1-7). God decides to restore the fallen spouse (11:8-11). Sin will be punished first (11:12-13:16); some in Israel will then confess their sins (14:1-3) and that will allow them to flourish (14:4-9).

God does not order Hosea to do something God would not do. Like Hosea, God will buy back Israel from her owners. Hosea predicts this love before Assyria conquers the Northern Kingdom. This whole sequence of events could have been avoided if Israel had kept the covenant. Spiritual adultery ruined Israel’s marriage to God; that is Hosea’s (God’s) message. Hosea speaks of a change in the heart of God. He explains that the Lord is going to judge the nation for its sin. However, the Lord is going to be reasonable in displaying his anger. He would restrain his anger and show mercy to Ephraim. Critics argue that the Lord cannot have any anger, but Hosea talks about that anger. Wolff sees it as excitement as opposed to anger (Wolff, 1974). It must be understood that the anger of God is not rage but indignation and sorrow over sin, ingratitude, and adultery in a marital relationship.

The righteousness and justice of God are two characteristics that Hosea portrayed to show how God is committed to his covenant relationship with Israel in his role as husband. God relates to Israel in strength, loyalty, and uprightness. What God offers to

Israel and what he contributes to the relationship are what he demands in return: love, justice, righteousness, mercy, and faithfulness. Israel must be reliable in keeping her part of the promise, that is, to respond to the need of her husband in love.

Remedy for Irreconcilable Differences: Be Reconciled

If one divorces a wife or a husband for adultery, can the innocent spouse be remarried? Here is how the apostle Paul responds to the argument. According to 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, “to the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.” It was clear that men and women had the right to divorce, according to Deuteronomy 24. But Paul joins his voice with Mark and Luke to tell us what Matthew meant in his teaching, regardless of one’s interpretation of the exception clause. That is, marriage is indissoluble, divorce is forbidden, separation is permitted, and there can be no remarriage without reconciliation.

The path to reconciliation is forgiveness. The purpose of forgiveness is reconciliation, which is the renewing of warmth and trust after a period of hostility and conflict. The concept can be extended to refer to peace making between conflicting groups. Reconciliation is sometimes the outcome of forgiveness. Forgiveness is never without reconciliation, provided that the sinner repents. The total removal of sin as a result of divine forgiveness is variously expressed in the Scriptures (Psalm 103:12-13; Isaiah 38:17; Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 7:19). Ideally, the effect of forgiveness and reconciliation is to restore to its former state the relationship that was broken by sin. Such

a restoration requires the cooperation of both parties. There must be a granting and an acceptance of forgiveness. The Bible makes it clear that a forgiven sinner must forgive others. The basis for forgiveness is love. Admittedly, many people in the church struggle with forgiveness because they desire to get even with the offender. The apostle Paul understood this when he said, “In your anger do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). The essence of forgiveness is defined in Romans 12:17-19. Forgiveness is surrendering the desire to hurt back. It is not a sign of weakness but of strength. The weak cannot forgive; only the strong do. In a Christian worldview, forgiveness is a duty. Christ sets no limit to the extent of forgiveness (Luke 17:4), and it must be granted without reserve and exception. Conflict is the result of sin that exists in every person’s heart. People are sinners. When two sinners are joined together in holy matrimony, conflict is inevitable. And that will affect the marital relationship. Unlike every other relationship in life, marriage is a union that requires an exceptional commitment to forgiveness and reconciliation.

For people who are married to non-Christians, Paul gives instruction in 1 Corinthians 7:12-13. “To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.” It is important to notice that the message is addressed to a believer who has an unbelieving spouse. It seems that the question applies to people who became Christians after marriage. If a person has an unbelieving spouse who is willing to stay with him or her, the Christian is not to divorce. Paul continues the teaching of Jesus: marriage is sacred and until death parts the spouses. Paul clearly says that if the nonbeliever leaves, the Christian is to let him or her leave. But Paul is clear: the believer

ought not to force out the unbelieving spouse, for the way the Christian treats the spouse might bring the man or woman to God. God has his purpose for everyone. Marriage must be honored by all (Hebrew 13:4). It is the law of marriage. However, the law applies only to those who live (Romans 7:1). When one is dead, the law has no effect on him or her. Hence, the non-Christian may choose to dishonor the marriage vow. If so, the Christian is no longer bound by the covenant of marriage with him or her. So we read in 1 Corinthians 7:15, “But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.” The unbelieving spouse broke the yoke and has no respect for covenant. Honor God in marriage: the idea is to live an exemplary lifestyle. God has called us to live in peace. The key word here is “bound,” which means to make a slave of something or someone. Marriage is a bond made for life. If an unbelieving spouse leaves, a Christian is no longer under a marital covenant with an unbeliever. There is no bondage at this point. The implication is that the believer is free to remarry. However, the believer must do his or her best to reconcile, if reconciliation is possible.

Should separation become inevitable, Christians are to remain celibate for the sake of possible reconciliation (1 Corinthians 7:10). If one were to take the rebuttal of the disciples in Matthew 19 as a question (why get married?), in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul makes the case. Get married because it is good and commendable to do so for the sake of companionship and progeniture (1 Timothy 5:14). Sexual drives are strong. Marriage provides a sacred setting for sexual activity. The husband and wife must seek to satisfy each other sexually. Marriage is the place to serve and learn to live in harmony with one another. Marriage provides a place for family cohesion, comfort, and identity. It gives a

true meaning to the word *home*. Celibacy is not for everyone, just as marriage is not for everyone. Jesus says in Matthew 19:1-12 that some are called by God to be celibate, others choose to be celibate, and others are made so. They are free of the complications that are part of marriage. Marriage involves satisfying another person; celibacy does not. Marriage leads to many demands; celibacy is free of all those demands. Time and energy that married people spend in becoming a whole is time that celibate persons can spend with God and becoming a whole with him. Married people develop a want for each other's presence; the celibate does so for God. If a man or a woman wants to be single forever, he or she does not sin in doing so. Marriage is spiritually and morally right and not inferior to singleness in any way. But Paul encourages those who want to be single to remain so. These are the scriptural injunctions including Haitians Christians in the Diaspora.

CHAPTER 4

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Political Struggle for Survival and Its Effect on the Family Unit

The literature that informs this research comes from writings on ethnicity, sociological perspective, and cultural norms. The term ethnocultural (Berry, 1994) is a combination word that comes from the two terms ethnicity and culture. It refers to numerous features of a society (e.g., its uniqueness, substance, and vitality). It refers to the cross-cultural understanding that combines ethnicity with culture and the relationships that exist among Haitians as a result of their different racial backgrounds, different localities, and ongoing changes in different life settings. Ethnicity describes a person who comes from a particular original cultural group because he or she is either an offspring (e.g., African) and/or derived from a particular group (e.g., African-American). Haitians are a minority group with multiracial origins. As a minority group, Haitians are sometimes identified with African Americans (Pierre-Louis, 2001). In a sense, Haitians have always been and perhaps will always be a minority, a group that is politically less powerful. The term culture usually includes notions of ecology and ecosystem: how people in communities interact with one another. Haitians are a distinct group of people whose development and behavior can be interpreted only in terms of cultural psychology. The concept of cultural psychology implies the understanding and discovering of the relationship that exists between culture and behavior (Berry, 1994). This embodies not only the socioeconomic and political organizations of Haitians but also their worldview: fundamental beliefs (cognitive), feelings (affective), and shared values (evaluative) in the context of Haitians' ethnocultural identity (Berry, 1994).

Understanding Haitians as an Ethnocultural Group

Conventional understandings of the long-lasting effect of slavery on the Haitian family prompt a need to discuss a biblical understanding that will give lasting value to marriage and family in the Haitian community. One cannot find current studies that explore the direct effect of slavery and its effect on marriage and family in the Haitian milieu, but some identifiable stressors give a partial understanding of the tensions within marriages and families. We note how acculturation and its impact on Haitian immigrants in America affect Haitians to seek professional help when they are in distress (Carter and McGoldrick, 2005; Lindor, 2001). We see how Haitians encounter adjustment difficulties because they do not want to be subservient to others.

Historian J. C. Dorsainvil (1942), whose work is read in almost every elementary school in Haiti, writes about Haiti's historical path from its genesis to the present. The extent to which Haiti's civilization was affected by slavery is explored by M. J. Herskovits (1937), who observed Haitian life in the village of Mirebalais. There, he found that the African way of life had been preserved. He contends that the way the inhabitants carried out their daily affairs, according to a clan system, resembled the way of life found in Dahomeah, Africa (Herskovits, 1937).

The most horrific effect of slavery on marriage is reported by Leyburn, who explains how slave masters took advantage of female slaves (Leyburn, 1941). Even though there was no interracial marriage in the colonial era, interracial relationships were common. Biracial children were born out of wedlock, says T. Madiou (Gullickson, 2004; Leyburn, 1941). The attitudes toward forming relationships have been the hallmark of the nation from generation to generation. Marriage was not forbidden, nor was it encouraged

in the colony. According to Madiou, legislation was passed to forbid illicit sexual relationships, but the effort amounted to nothing (Leyburn, 1941). The law did not encourage extramarital affairs, but it could not legislate marriage. The point that needs to be emphasized here is the stress that this historical situation, and its aftermath, had on relationships in the community.

Haitians react to stressors, which are related to the cultural pattern with regard to male and female relationships (Martelly, 2003). When it comes to issues such as family values, the definition of the term may vary among Haitians. Families may have different understandings of the process of raising a child and conducting family affairs. But many Haitians would agree that knowledge must translate into action. Growth is measured by maturation, experience, social transmission, and the process of equilibration (Kaplan, 1998). The fine points of distinctions can be understood only in the context of environment: social class and social influences. The individual is a member of a family structure. These are premarital factors that can be served as predictors of the quality of relationship that a later generation would experience. The quality of parent-child relationship will dictate the outcome of relationship between members of the community. When gender roles are changed, the perception of children in the family has also changed, for better or for worse (Kaplan, 1998).

Augsburger explains the importance of distinguishing and learning from the three aspects in all of us: the universal, which we share with all humans; the culturally programmed, which we learn from our own culture of origin; and our individual uniqueness, which distinguishes each of us from all other people (Augsburger, 1986). He

explains that from a cross-cultural viewpoint, moral development might be ethical (Augsburger, 1986). The nature of decision making might be communal or individual.

There are two things that contribute to a successful marriage for Haitians. They go beyond the mutual consent of the husband and wife. First, the couple must be able to cope with each other's family of origin. Second, the couple must be also able to separate from their family of origin and establish a new relationship that is free from the influence and emotional dependence of the family of origin (Balswick & Balswick, 1991; Carter & McGoldrick, 2005).

Family Life

The effect of slavery on the Haitian family is not purely negative. Haitians can credit slavery for interracial, interfaith, and intercultural marriages (Fu, 2003). Relationships between Haitian men and women are influenced by many factors (Hildebrandt, 2003; Chung, 1999). Ho (1990) argues that a married couple may experience different stages of marital development. Race and ethnicity continue to interact, with the family being *germinated* at every stage of intermarriage (Ostine, 2001). Thus, Haitians inherit a new cultural identity (Delva, 2005). Most of the literature that addresses the issue of identity concludes that identity is a matter of self-concept and that it is both personal and social (Sethlhare-Oagile, 2005).

Haitians and Relationships

Even though Haitians have been free from slavery for more than two centuries, historical trends continue to surface in the Haitian psyche and in Haitians' behavior. One

of the effects of slavery on Haitian families is depression caused by detachment. We note that Haitian couples who grew up in a family that experienced frequent detachments experience poorer marital functioning. They tend to have greater difficulty to separate themselves from their family of origin. They have difficulties to form a healthy marital dyad with its own identity (Keny, 2007). On the other hand, those who are disengaged with the family of origin fail to learn how to connect with the closest members of their immediate family.

The failure to appreciate or allow for the differentness in the other person comes from never really having become emotionally independent of one's parents. This leaves a person in the position of trying to build self-esteem in the marriage.

Neither partner dares to communicate his or her fears to the other. Thus the couple can become bound in a web of evasiveness and ambiguity, because neither can dare to be straight with the other, for fear of things turning out unhappily, as they did in their families (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 213).

For many decades, many researchers have placed great importance on the quality of marriage (Fincham, 2000). But most of this research is about interracial marriage (Ostine, 2001). From generation to generation, Haitians have always struggled to find where they fit in a new culture. In the Haitian community, we see that people who cohabit before marriage tend to be less dedicated to one another than those who cohabited after marriage. These husbands were less dedicated to their wives than their wives were to them. A study on pre-engagement cohabitation and gender asymmetry in marital commitment concludes that

Dedication (interpersonal commitment) levels on the basis of premarital cohabitation history finds that men who cohabited with their spouse before engagement were less dedicated than men who cohabited only after engagement or not at all before marriage” (Roger & Amato, 1997, pp. 1089-1100).

Belizaire investigates the relationship between adult attachment, coping, acculturative stress, and quality of life among Haitian immigrants and concludes that avoidance attachment was positively correlated with acculturative stress and negatively correlated with social relationships and environment (Belizaire, 2007). Lindor claims that adaptive coping was positively correlated with social relationships. The results of her study suggest that the stress reactions rooted in the experience of acculturation are partially explained by attachment relationships and coping strategies (Lindor, 2003). She claims that there is a relationship between attachment and coping.

Haitian parents and their children face many obstacles (Lilly, 2005). Various studies explore the effect of estranged relationships on children.

“Using the 1987 and 1988 National survey of Families and Households (NSFH), Webster, Orbuch, and House found that children of divorce and those who never lived with their father were significantly more likely than those from two parent families to have doubts about the stability of their marriage” (Keny, 2007, p. 21).

Keny contends that marital satisfaction among Haitians is tied to faith and prayer (Keny, 2007). As was the case in the colonial and postcolonial eras, the absence of fathers in Haitian homes continues to contribute to the decline of family in the community. The attitudes of slave masters with regard to relationships gave rise to specific perceptions of parent-child relationships and inform the predictors of marriage

and family for later generations. Many of these matters have to do with what E. Erikson called trust and mistrust in relationship (Miller, 2002). Erikson explains that in the first year of growth, a child need to develop a sense of trust, which requires a feeling of physical comfort and a minimal amount of fear and apprehension about the future. He contends that trust in infancy sets the stage for a lifelong expectation that the world will be a good and pleasant place. According to Erikson, people are motivated to be connected. For Haitians, connectedness is not only a natural phenomenon but also an ethnocultural phenomenon (Lemy, 2002). Fine and Hovestadt concluded that “pathology may be transmitted from the family of origin, along with factors related to health such as higher levels of rationality and more positive perception of marriage” (Lemy, 2002, p. 21).

Since the colonial era, Haitians have struggled to maintain healthy marriages. They have succeeded in maintaining healthy families in dysfunctional marriages. A normal family is healthy and functional (Walsh, 2003). For many Haitians, a healthy family is ideal. It is conceptualized in terms of basic norms of communication, care, and interaction; the extended family is often the one entity that provides the psychosocial perspective by which the individual members of the family influence each other in the most profound ways. But the symptoms of unhealthy marriages in the community are often observed in areas of attachment between couples (Belizaire, 2007).

The author of this thesis finds little conclusive study done that takes seriously the level of attachment and detachment between Haitian couples as a result of slavery.

Haitians' Theology of Marriage

There is a significant literature that addresses the issues of marriage and its nature as a covenant relationship. For the sake of this thesis, one can find limited research that focuses on Haitians' theology of marriage. This is one of the reasons that the author of this present study aims to present a practical application of his theology of marriage as it is commonly believed by most Haitian theologians. The author of this thesis contends that there are theologians among the Haitian community who hold different views from the one presented in this paper. Often, these theologians consider themselves as holding a liberal point of view in the issue of marriage. Their critics would agree.

Balswick and Balswick (1991) write from a Christian perspective on the contemporary home. They argue that marriage implies covenant. Husband and wife enter into a covenantal relationship via marriage. God created male and female for the sake of companionship. The family is a created unit where people love each other unconditionally. It is a place where one can count on the other at all times. This relationship between husband and wife reflects the dependent relationship of the church to God. Commitment to love is at the center of that relationship, and the relationship fosters by love and grace the ability to forgive and to be forgiven. It empowers one to serve and to be served in the most profound way. It is this sort of family that encourages such a bond in marriage that divorce is often unconceivable. The authors assert that divorce is often triggered by abandonment. The Balswicks conclude that divorce is a spiritual problem. This is a belief that most Haitian Protestants accept to be true. And to avoid divorce, Christian couples need to acknowledge the activities of their life that are

contrary to God's Word. Meanwhile, they must take concrete steps to correct those activities.

Shields (1999) argues that 25 percent of adults today have been divorced at least once. The rate is highest among blacks. It is the author's opinion that this decline of family values is directly linked to the New Age movement, a postmodern worldview that affects the church. People reject the fact that marriage is a covenantal relationship that is therefore indissoluble. Those who argue for their right to divorce and remarriage claim Deuteronomy 24:1 as their rationale. Therein lies the reason that Paul forbids mixed marriages (1 Corinthians 7:15-17). The early Christians fought to preserve the sanctity of marriage by teaching and celebrating the marriage ceremony.

Methodology for Appraisal

Throughout the years, psychology has seen many different theories based on research (Yount, 1996). For example, the Russian physiologist I. Pavlov developed classical conditioning theory which can explain a child's emotional response to school. Historically, two major areas of psychology have been at the center stage in professional counseling: psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Psychoanalytic theory was developed in the late nineteenth century by S. Freud. Freud asserts that people are strongly influenced by conscious and unconscious forces. (Corsini & Wedding, 2000). Behaviorism was a theory developed by B. F. Skinner, an American psychologist. He championed what are called the principles of operant conditioning, a type of learning that involves reinforcement and punishment (Corsini & Wedding, 2000).

For years, psychologists practiced and emphasized these theories as principles of counseling. These views went on almost unopposed. (Corsini & Wedding, 2000).

However, in the 1950s, psychologists were introduced to a new approach to professional counseling: humanistic psychology, which focused on the capacity of an individual for self-reflection and growth. As an alternative to psychoanalysis and behaviorism, humanistic psychology became known as the third force of psychotherapy.

Humanistic psychology is the theory that contends that the learner is more than a mechanical object (Corsini & Wedding, 2000). The theory calls for the counseling session to be personalized and is more concerned with the individual learner than the curriculum itself. The focus is on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral development of the student. The emphasis is on personal freedom and growth, choice, and self-determination in the educational process.

The persuasive view of humanistic psychology was presented by its founder, Carl Rogers (Corsini & Wedding, 2000). The theory promotes self-directed growth, which is based on relationship between the client and the counselor. In this type of therapist-client relationship, the therapist accepts the client with openness, honesty, and confidence that the client is capable of enhancing his condition. Rogers asserts that once clients sense acceptance on the part of the therapist, they are more apt to reveal themselves and their weaknesses. In so doing, the genuineness and empathic environment created by the therapist moves the client toward making progress in resolving a wide variety of personal problems (Corsini & Wedding, 2000).

The approach is said to be centered on the individual person. The term *person-centered* refers to the idea that counseling should revolve around the client, as opposed to

directive therapy, which is directed by the counselor (Yount, 1996, p. 235). The counseling process is centered on the counselee as opposed to the counselor (Yount, 1996, p. 235).

In Rogers's view, the counselor should trust clients to do their work to the best of their ability and provide opportunities for growth. The counselor should respect the client's feelings and frustration. The essential of this therapeutic model is that the counselor leads the client without taking responsibility from him or her (Yount, 1996). Rogers argued that a positive relationship enables people to grow, and therefore the instruction should be based on concepts of human relations, in contrast to concepts of subject matter (Corsini & Wedding, 2000).

In an effort to define accurately what constitutes effective counseling, Egan says that "counseling is the professional field [that] aims to help human beings make sense of their problem in their own eyes" (Egan, 1998, p. 25). The key word is *helping*. Egan argues that to help someone is to bring about a desired outcome. It is the act of making a difference in the life of an individual. The goal of helping a client is to bring the client to a level of awareness to increase the individual's potentiality to act positively in his or her current situation. Egan explains helping in terms of three different stages with several steps. The first step is to understand the client's present state of affairs. Understanding starts with the counselor's ability to identify and clarify the problem that the client is facing and explore all situations and unused opportunities. In this effort, the counselor will try to help the client to tell his or her story (Egan, 1998). Then the counselor breaks through blind spots that prevent the client from seeing his situation realistically. At this

point, the counselor moves to help the client to make substantial differences in his or her life. The counselor needs to make sure that the helping process supports the client.

The counselor helps the client to spell out elements of a better future. This step will help him to move beyond the problem-misery mind-set he brings with him and develop a bit of hope. Brainstorming possibilities for a better future often helps the client to understand his problem situations better. Now that he is beginning to know what he wants, he can easily identify the most important issues in his life. (Egan, 1998, p. 130)

Within an integrated Christian framework, if the problem is sin, then the counselor needs to help the client to pursue substantial priorities or goals such as biblical recommendations for restoration. Restoration means reconciliation of a good relationship between enemies. In order to achieve this good relationship, it is necessary that the factors that produce the enmity be removed.

When the client and the clinician share the same racial and ethnic background, assumptions are frequently made about the therapeutic relationship. A common assumption is that this relationship yields increased understanding and empathy. Non-Haitian therapists (including Black therapists not of Haitian ancestry) may question their ability to engage and treat Haitians. Haitian therapists might have the advantage of developing a rapid rapport with Haitian clients because they can rely on common experiences, cultural understanding, and so on. It is important for non-Haitian therapists to develop confidence in working with Haitians, particularly in the beginning stages of therapy” (Brice, 1982, pp. 123-133).

In the context of helping, the family itself can be the focus of treatment. Helping is about the person, not the method (Cormier & Hackney, 1999; Eisenberg, 1979; Stanley, 1999; Wright, 2003). Thus, counseling must be first and foremost person-centered. After assessing the problem in the family, the pastor-counselor will then create a framework for understanding the problem. This framework must be Christian-oriented but leaves room for different approaches to helping people.

The ethnosociocultural model is a guide to encourage the therapist to be cross-cultural in his or her thinking as he or she counsels people, Haitians in particular. The model offers reassurance and support to Haitian clients in distress. It encourages adaptive functioning and evidence of mutual understanding in the counseling relationship. It offers insights to both the counselor and the client. The model emphasizes the recognition of respect of the young for the old. It recognizes the importance of the extended family. It recognizes the effect of slavery and colonization over marriage and family in the Haitian community. It also recognizes the acculturative stress that most Haitians have to cope with in their struggle for survival.

Much has been written in the subject of helping from a Christian perspective, (e.g., Jones & Butman, 2005), but the author of this thesis finds nothing geared directly toward helping Haitian believers who are in distress. "Christians interested in the study of human experience, including carious dysfunctions and psychopathologies, need to be informed by these insights and pastoral reflections on the experience of trouble persons and the church's concerns for everyday and ultimate needs" (Yarhouse, Butman & McRay, 2005, pp. 15-16). With those facts in view, this thesis is written as a contribution to the field of marriage and family counseling.

CHAPTER 5

TO WHOM AM I MARRIED: A CASE STUDY

Often in the Haitian community, marital conflict is not a result of a partner's wrongdoing to the other, but a conflict of the partner's identity in the marriage. It may be that after enduring the tragedy of a tedious relationship with much abuse and other type of suffering that a spouse finds himself or herself searching for the one he or she has fallen in love with. Some spouses feel lonely, bored, empty, angry, afraid, resentful, or bitter in a marriage relationship that was meant to last forever. The title of this chapter, "to whom am I married," is the cry of a couple who is searching for his or her spouse. For they both claimed that at one point in their relationship, they have lost each other. As husband and wife during the time of conflicts the words spoken and the silent treatment, the accusations that are lobbed push them to ask where my husband is, where is my wife? What happened to my marriage? To whom am I married?

The Haitian survival instinct always comes to the fore whenever he or she is facing a difficult situation. Moreover, coupled with their mistrust of professionals in the field of helping, sometimes, Haitians are reluctant to seek help in time of crisis. Even if they do seek help, often it is when the matter is out of hand and a solution is nearly impossible to find. Even then, they still approach therapy with a different mindset, which tends to minimize the issue they are facing. They intellectualize it, rationalize it. The most religious ones would categorize it as a matter of God's will. This attitude transcends socioeconomic and educational boundaries. Haitians strongly value their ability to solve their own problems. When problems cannot be solved, that is when they may seek spiritual guidance from their pastor or their priest. At times, they may go to another

family member of higher social status for advice. Haitians may use federal, state, and local services, but only as a last resort. Thus, a therapeutic approach to help Haitians must take into consideration the need to facilitate engagement in the process; to the point that sometimes the helper may find that he or she needs to accompany a client to a referral. Haitians of whatever generation have inherited a sense of pride and cultural biases. They resent feelings of inferiority.

The following case study of a Haitian married couple will highlight how a typical Haitian family might react in times of conflict. Secondly, the author of this thesis will also highlight his assessment of the family history and his clinical intervention, which might serve as a systemic model to help therapists to assist Haitian families and individuals. Names have been changed to protect confidentiality. Corey the husband and Lyn the wife came to therapy in partial fulfillment of their church requirement to be committed to find a solution to their marital concerns.

Meet the Couple

Corey- Corey is a Mulatto. He does not know his father. His mother is Haitian, but his father is the son of a Syrian couple who went to Haiti as merchants. Corey was raised in a home with his mother, who was very controlling and abusive to him. Nonetheless, Corey has always looked to his mother for advice and decision making. His mother believes that significance depends on always being able to live up to a certain image. From his youth, Corey learned to flee to safety when his needs were threatened. His upbringing has made him a naïve person, very secretive and task-oriented. On entering adulthood, he longed to control that child within himself. He grew up knowing

that he could gain acceptance and love, a sense of significance, if he was attractive and had money to buy his way out. In other word, for Corey, money is everything. Corey believes that if he does not have material possessions, he cannot be loved, and therefore, he is a worthless human being.

Lyn- Lyn is Caucasian. Her parents are both Haitian of European descent. She is from a family of nine. She is the youngest of four sisters and older than her three brothers. They all used to live in Haiti, except the oldest sister, who lived in the southeastern United States. In the Haitian economy, they have enough to get by daily, but no one would consider them to be a middle-class family financially. However, they think very highly of themselves. Lyn's oldest sister is the breadwinner of the family in Haiti. Their father is a retired former military man who served in the Haitian army. The mother is a businesswoman who currently owns a boutique in Massachusetts. In Lyn's family context, marriage can be for better or for worse only when it comes to wealth. Money is the family's blueprint for constructing a relationship and building loyalty. In their context, the husband must meet those expectations. There is not much animosity toward Lyn's father, who is retired, because he used to provide those things. In that regard, he has some respect in the household as a former breadwinner. And it is because of his diligence that his oldest daughter now lives in the United States. Nonetheless, it is obvious that Lyn's mother is the most influential personality in her family. The father is somewhat more passive. All the siblings seem to follow one or the other character type of the parents. The quality of relationships in the family is somewhat lacking, and communication is often portrayed as one-sided. That pattern has had a significant influence on the children.

The Couple and Their Chief Complaint

The husband, Corey is forty years old. Corey is an auto mechanic who works at a General Motors car dealership. He is charming, sociable, and a confessed Christian. He is a faithful member of a local congregation. His wife, Lynda, whom shall be referred to as Lyn, is an energetic young woman of Eastern European descendant. They are both Haitians living in the U.S. Lyn is four years younger than Corey. She earned an associate degree in liberal arts and humanities from a local community school. She had never been in a serious relationship before. They live in a suburban area in Massachusetts. They were married for a year when they had their first child, Corey Junior. He is a real joy to the family. In this relationship, Corey presents the image of a mature adult who knows what he may be looking for. But it is not always so with Lyn.

For this family, one of the key ingredients to a fulfilled life and happiness is money. Hence, all their behavior is motivated toward one goal, getting rich. At times, Lyn is frustrated and unhappy. Corey is frustrated with Lyn. He thinks that Lyn is too greedy and too obsessed with fame. Corey met Lyn at the youth group where they attended church since a young age. Lyn was a wonder to almost every young man in the church. She knew she was pretty and intelligent; she made sure that every young man in the church took notice of her. In that “beauty contest,” Corey took notice of Lyn. Lyn was innocent and beautiful, said Corey. He developed an interest in Lyn because of her enthusiasm, warmth, and interest for success in life. Lyn saw Corey as a way to meet her goal of becoming wealthy. And she wanted sex only when she thought she could gain something. Lyn had dated many other young men prior to meeting Corey. But of all the

men she met, Corey was the most consistent, caring, and available. Corey had also met a young girl before he met Lyn, but that relationship did not end well. Corey seemed to love the Lord, said Lyn, and she liked the attention she received from him. Corey showed a tremendous interest in protecting Lyn, attention that Lyn seemed to bask in at first.

After several years of marriage, Lyn feels that she is too heavily controlled by her husband and wants him to release some of his control over her. She wants to be more independent and free to make decisions of her own. From the time she felt the need to be freed from her husband's dominance, she did not know how to vocalize her concerns. At times, she felt frustrated. Thus, as a way to retaliate, she refused to cook for him and do the housework, as had been her custom. She felt the need to break off the relationship. But every time she tried that, she felt lonely and consumed by a desire to be in her husband's arms. Hence, they go back and forth with a series of good times and bad times. After a period of moving in and out of the house and the relationship, Corey found a letter from his wife stating that she felt lonely in the marriage and cold toward him, and that she does not feel she is needed in his life. She mentioned that even sexually, they do not find agreement. Lyn told Corey that she felt she is a magnet in his hand and that she does not own her own feelings. She stated that she loves him, but she does not want this manipulative relationship any more. She said that she felt trapped in a relationship that she senses is going the wrong way. This news came through in a memo Lyn sent to the counselor: "It's over." As for Corey, he acknowledges that the relationship is not doing well. But he is not willing to quit the relationship.

History of Their Chief Complaint

In this marriage, there is an abusive pattern of seduction. Corey makes his wife do sexual things against her will, attacks the sexual parts of her body, pursues her for sex, and then turns her off by criticizing her sexual performance. Both spouses are emotionally abusive. They will put one another down, call one another names, play mind games, and stonewall. Corey attempts to control and isolate Lyn: what she does, whom she sees and talks to, where she goes. He denies her access to a car. He deliberately removes her from her support system. Both spouses threaten to hurt one another emotionally, or do so. They threaten to divorce or have an emotional affair. The level of abuse is very serious but has not been escalated to the level of physical violence. The couple finds it normal to blame each other's parents for their internal conflicts. Corey claims that his wife's parents prevent him from having full control over his household and the activities of his wife. As a result, over the years he developed some restrictions to prevent Lyn from visiting with her parents or to prevent them from visiting at her home.

Corey was born from a difficult relationship. His childhood and adolescent life was a very unhappy time. Corey does not enjoy a good relationship with his family. He does not like any of his siblings and rarely speaks to them. They do not like him either. Corey has no friends except his television set with its remote control, and his so-called friends are a few women whom he used psychologically to intimidate his wife and to trigger her to jealousy.

By contrast, Lyn's entire family is very close, and she is close to her parents. Lyn is the idol of her family. Every one spoiled her because of her tenderness and the special attention she gives to them. Lyn has enjoyed the leadership of her father and his

protection of her. In this instance, Lyn always craved that from her husband. At the same time she seems to use her husband's hard-line approach as a way to distance herself from her family without feeling guilty about doing so. This approach only succeeds in escalating the tension between her family members and her husband, who then blames her for the estranged relationship between him and her family. Now that Lyn has realized her mistakes, she has taken steps to renew her relationship with her parents. Under the guise of family duty, she began to renounce her responsibilities in her own home.

Developmental Issues

It was not Lyn's desire to marry Corey. She had a boyfriend at the time, but her parents disapproved of him. Lyn married Corey under pressure from her family; her parents wanted her to act as if she loved Corey in order that she might obtain legal entry to the United States. Lyn married him for personal gain. Her former pastor in Haiti knew about that and opposed the union from the beginning but later relented and performed the wedding ceremony. The relationship began to deteriorate after Lyn was found to be pregnant with Corey's child. At this time, Lyn's parents were very angry with her because their plan had been for her to come to the United States and stay with Corey for at least a year, until her immigration papers were approved. They wanted to use her green card to fraudulently get her other siblings into the United States. Then she would leave Corey. Her oldest sister warned her "not to fall in love with this man and to have protective sex." If Lyn took the relationship seriously, that would undermine if not eliminate the possibility for her siblings to immigrate. The family made severe threats to her life.

Lyn said that she felt in her heart that marrying Corey was wrong. She claims that she worked to improve the relationship, in spite of her parents' ill advice, and that she truly fell in love with Corey. "My heart desires him so much. But, she says, "the more I tried, the more he is giving me reasons not love him. He is abusive, negligent toward the child and me. He is constantly putting me down. He said that I would never be anything in life. I am useless and desperately helpless. I am aiming to nothingness. I still remember these things, and they make me sad. I am frustrated. I doubt that this relationship is going to work. I don't want to leave him. I want our marriage to work, but I am tired of the threats and the abuses."

According to Corey, he was introduced to his wife by a friend who happens to be Lyn's uncle. He said that his friend (Lyn's uncle) told him about Lyn and that he decided to travel to Haiti to meet with her. He traveled five times to Haiti, including the time of the wedding. The first time, they met, and he told Lyn that he loved her and wanted to marry her. She agreed. They got married, and the two of them moved to the United States just weeks after the wedding. Corey said that he has made a lot of mistakes, which he believes to be contributing factors to his current difficulties in the relationship.

Corey does not know that his union with his wife was duplicitous and that his wife's parents did not want the relationship to last for long. Corey experiences a lot of insecurity in the relationship. He is not sure whether the relationship will continue. Lyn argues that her husband is negligent, careless, and abusive. He has not been involved in his child's life, according to Lyn. But Corey denies all that, claiming that he has been involved and has taken good care of his child. Lyn says that her husband is irresponsible. "He does not keep his promises. At times, I doubt that he is telling me the truth. He is

very negligent toward me. I feel like I am lonely and that I am living in misery. As a result of my feeling, I explained all that to my parents because that is the way I grew up. Concerning the budget, we can plan and reconsider. But I am kept in the dark. I don't know what is going on. I came to this country a year ago. We have planned that I would go to work. But I suddenly got pregnant. Corey refuses to fill out my immigration papers."

Corey complains that Lyn is a demanding person. "She demands from me what I don't have financially. Before our marriage, I explained to her how life is in the U.S. I owed a lot of money to people, about nine thousand dollars. I managed to erase the debt. Lyn does not manage her choice of words. She makes decisions without my consent. She told her family about our personal affairs. Financially, I am struggling, but she does not understand it. I really don't understand her. She could be one person this time and be another the next time. She frustrates me very much."

Corey wiretapped his phone to record his wife's conversations. Lyn was unaware of that fact but suspected there was something going on with the phone because of the way it sounded. She decided to find out what was wrong with the phone, and she discovered the recording device. She was outraged. Corey says that he acted in such manner because his wife takes bad advice from other people instead of listening to him. Lyn claims that she spoke to no one but her older sister, who lives in another state. That older sister is a non-Christian. Both spouses contend that they act the way they do in an attempt to avoid greater problems within the family.

Theoretical Formulation

Corey grew up with an element of over submission; he will do anything that is asked of him, whereas Lyn's impulsiveness demonstrates a lack of consideration for the rights of her husband. As a result, after only one year in the relationship, Corey once again experiences boredom, a lack of persistence, and difficulty in initiating an effort to win the heart of his wife. Corey is now forty-three years old. He has spoken indirectly about his anxiety about health. He uses that argument as an excuse for inactivity and passive withdrawal. Lyn is animated by a fierce desire to take revenge on her husband for every wrongdoing. In her effort to make him pay for his wrongdoing, she finds it difficult to feel close to him.

In the relationship, there is a feeling of nonacceptance on the part of both individuals. They understand and admit that there is a need to be truly present for the other person if the relationship is to improve. They speak openly of the necessity to attend to the other person and become a better listener. Lyn reports that she senses in herself a readiness to suspend judgment against her husband until she knows fully what is going on. Corey contends that he is becoming more patient when his wife discloses her thoughts and feelings. They both have made a commitment to work toward a mutually beneficial dialogue. The impediment to Lyn's view of marriage is that in her family and surroundings, the idea that in marriage the partners become one flesh was merely a myth. She did not understand that marriage is for a lifetime. Corey was under the impression that growth is not a step-by-step basis but a sudden, experiential change in a person. The couple did not realize that they both needed to submit themselves under the lordship of

Jesus Christ if their marriage is to reflect the biblical pattern for marriage. They failed to realize that the strength for working toward this goal is possible only by the indwelling presence to the Holy Spirit.

Clinical Guidelines

The problems of this couple can be evaluated in three different dimensions:

1. The couple's relationship and interactions, communication, decision making, money management, and the use of power and intimacy. This includes the extended family relationship cycle.
2. The couple's current and past patterns of dealing and relating to each other's emotional issues. There is a lot of third-party involvement in the relationship. This involves also values, beliefs about spirituality, and social activities.
3. The applicable rules, norms, and options available to them as a couple in order to regain their love. Sex is infrequent in the relationship.

Summary of Problem Formulation

The clinical intervention begins with the assessment of the family's current state of affairs. Every intervention must begin with a clear perspective of biblical foundations for marriage. Haitians, no matter what their religious background, enter marriage with religious baggage. Christian counseling is not Christian counseling if it does not take biblical interpretation of marriage seriously. What will make our intervention effective in Corey and Lyn's case is contingent upon knowing the cultural values and norms as well as family background of the individuals in question. One cannot understand why Haitians

do what they do and the ways in which they do things without comprehending the sets of relationship that define their environment and provide a range of possibilities for them.

Haitians may also display characteristics that reflect the culture in which they are interacting. Thus, we propose the following systemic method that is useful for a therapist to consider in dealing with Haitian clients. In this therapeutic relationship, the therapist approached the couple as a distinct Haitian couple. The therapist kept in mind the fact that the couple is multiracial. Besides the therapist also took into consideration other factors that shape the Haitian psyche, such as, the couple's religious beliefs that contribute to the preservation of their value system.

CHAPTER 6

A SYSTEMIC COUNSELING METHOD

Setting the Systemic Method

The method that we suggest to counsel Haitians is called an ethnosociocultural model. The model is developed by the author of this thesis as a theoretical model to work with a Haitian family. The model is believed to be effective for both Christians and non-Christians. The model takes different factors into considerations. For example, the living cultural environment, the academic language, institutional barriers, stereotypes, ethnoracial, gender discrimination, and oppression, that are influencing the formation of Haitians personal and collective identity as an ethnocultural group. The model takes ethnicity, sociological perspective and cultural norms into consideration and incorporates them into the counseling process. This model takes into consideration Haitians' multiracial history. In this method, the therapist will assess the level of awareness of the individual client concerning the nature of his or her problems and responsibilities. In this model, the therapist also will explore the issues of race, sexual orientation, religion, age, gender, family values and/or status, and the ethnic background of the client. As the therapist works with the client, he or she needs to bear in mind that he or she may be dealing with multiple issues from a client's family of origin. These issues may be the basis for the problem at hand.

The ethnosociocultural model also takes into consideration the hierarchical rules and norms that often shape the Haitian mindset. In this model, therapy takes place in the context of family sessions. The basic idea is to learn about the family concerns and issues in an individual's life and the norms that govern decision making. All family problems

are examined in the social context as well as the context of the family of origin. To begin any effective counseling with Haitian couples or individuals, the clinician must begin to identify and track patterns, resources, and problems that have occurred over the individual's or the couple's life. The clinicians may need to do a genogram to help him or her explore the cultural heritage and the social issues that may have shaped the life of the clients. A family chronology may also be useful. The therapist has to revisit the historical background of the clients from the ethnosociocultural model.

The ethnosociocultural model calls for interaction with the family life cycle at every stage. This model also takes into consideration the religious background of the individual. Religion is one element that motivates Haitians to act in a certain ways, or it can be one of the major forces behind their cultural values. Beyond discussing the presenting problem, it is important to understand the community, the social connections, and the immediate family household in working with Haitians. The therapist must approach the Haitian client from the ethnoracial perspective if he or she is to be effective in his or her intervention. The ethnosociocultural model also informs the therapist of the Haitian client's behavior. Many Haitian parents and couples function according to a schedule. It might be that a couple's main daily goal is to run errands. In this case, the therapist will need to discover the informed processing concepts, that is, the thinking process that drives the couple. Then the therapist might understand some of the complex behavior that perhaps causes many issues that the couple, the family, or the individual faces. The model requires that the therapist looks for speech and perception from the family discipline that may drive the couple's pattern of decision making. The goal is to get the client to realize the consequence of any particular behavior that he or she may

choose. The therapist must be prepared to discuss explicit issues and behaviors behind the problems that family members face.

The ethnosociocultural approach that is proposed here as a therapeutic model can also be a treatment method based in family therapy theory. Again, this approach offers the therapist a way to comprehend family problems from a unique perspective among a unique group of people. This approach provides a form of intervention that will help the therapist to identify problems and provide effective help to the client. In this model, the family itself can be the source of treatment. Helping is about the person, not the method. Thus, counseling must be first and foremost a structure that emphasizes the importance or organizational process for family functioning and the well-being of the family members. One of the most important things that a family therapist needs to take into consideration while working with a Haitian client is interpersonal relationships. Haitians are relational. They will understand the corrective emotional experience only in the context of relationship. This is important especially because many times, Haitians come to counseling for issues that they deem too personal to deal with in the presence of a third party. In this case, their chief concern is the fact they perceive their situation to be demeaning. Having a level of interpersonal relationship will facilitate the therapist's desire to suggest some corrective measure that the clients might perceive to be a hostile or disparaging appraisal of them or of other people in the family.

In our initial conversation, the therapist helps the clients to tell their story. In that first session, the need for acceptance surfaces during the clients-therapist interaction. To Haitians, potency is a causal explanation for validity, especially for male clients, who need to be reaffirmed and to have control yielded to them. In the role of facilitator, the

therapist provides explanations that give prestige and power to both clients in their respective roles- by yielding leadership to them, decision making can lead to a good positive outcome. A good outcome is considered to be one that preserves the unity of the family. An individual from any ethnocultural group needs understanding and communal support for continued survival, for socialization, and for the pursuit of satisfaction. In the clients-therapist relationship, the therapist realizes the need to instill hope of a better future in the clients concerning their relationships. Instilling hope is a dimension of faith, which is the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrew 11:1). With Haitian clients, the concept of belief in a better tomorrow is quintessential and paramount to their expectations. The therapist basic task is to create cohesion between himself and the clients. Only then a positive outcome is possible. In Haitian wisdom, when a child fails a task or in pursuit of a goal, Haitian parents will offer reassurance and consolation to the child. Haitian parents instruct their children not to let superstitions, phobias, fears, and other psychic obstructions to interfere with attaining goals even though these might be a reality. In helping the clients to tell their story, the therapist takes the role of an instructor in his relationship with the clients. His didactic instruction provides structure and explanation to the clients, both of which have intrinsic value for Haitians. In this social dynamic interaction, the therapist had an opportunity to discover blind spots that impairs the vision of the clients. This final point constitutes a basic axiom for therapy with Haitian couples. In this approach, the therapist uses his therapeutic skills to gather information by asking the clients to think, to shift internal arrangements, to examine the consequences of behavior. When the therapist takes the role of facilitator, the clients find it easier to assimilate all the new information passed on to

them. When information is presented to the Haitians in need, it necessitates an immediate decision that may change the family lifestyle. A developmental crisis can occur at that very moment. When such is the case, the counselor may need to assess the cohesiveness of the family as well as their internal resilience. The therapist may need to determine the internal resiliency of the family members by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of individual family members. In Corey and Lyn's situation, the therapist proceeds to assess the clients' level of understanding and coping mechanisms. In so doing, the counselor determines the major indicators of the family's difficulties. Because the counselor is a culturally aware counselor, he has a clearer vision of the clients' basic values and assumptions. Thus, he begins to look for sources within the Haitian culture to provide influential help. Only then he begins to move counseling from theory to effective human experience. This counselor is also able to differentiate between the culture and the individual. In so doing, he cross-culturally becomes aware of either acculturation or the remains of monocultural threats that appear in the clients' particular problem.

If the goal of therapy is to create cohesion, within the ethnosociocultural model, the therapist needs to measure the dimensions of emotional bonding, boundaries, time spent together, the type of friendships the family cherishes, decision making and interactions, and vacations and recreation. A clinician will do well to understand the variables that shape Haitian culture in order to understand why Haitians do what they do and how they do it. If a therapist needs to fully grasp the context in which Haitians understand marriage and family, he or she needs to understand the religious component that may play a role in how the Haitian man or woman approaches marriage and family institutions.

Assessment

After the initial meeting with the couple, the therapist explained to the couple the need to administer a needs assessment during their second session. What is the purpose of needs assessment? A needs assessment is conducted in order to identify and select current real needs suitable for translation into goals, which in turn guide the diagnostic process. One begins with current real needs. In other words, the clinician or the counselor seeks to know what troubles the client affectively, spiritually, socially, and behaviorally. The second thing that the clinician or the counselor will do at the level of the assessment is to identify and prioritize those needs. The identification process is the heart of the assessment. It utilizes various methodologies. The methods are movements to understand what causes the problem primarily or even what perpetuates the cause. The assessment is done for a reason, and the reason is to formulate a diagnosis. The first essential of any approach to assessment is the ability to observe. Observation is in fact a means to assess the client's or the client's condition and mood. Looks provide the key to condition. Is the client wan, listless, sleepy, alert and smiling, depressed, pleased to see the counselor, indifferent to the counselor's presence, teary, flushed, or breathless?

The therapist chooses to use the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (T-JTA) as the assessment tool. The T-JTA measures nine common personality traits and assesses psychological adjustment. The therapist explains to the couple that the assessment results will provide objective, self-report information about their feelings, attitudes, and behavior patterns. It will help the therapist to identify personal strengths and weaknesses that can be explored in one-on-one discussions with each individual. The therapist explains to

them that these personality traits are significant in terms of both personal and interpersonal relationships and that the findings of this report will be used to develop the counseling process with them. The clients willingly give their consent to do the assessment.

The assessment is self-oriented; each individual completes his or her own form. Then their scores are compared for counseling purposes. Each respondent was instructed to answer the questions independently, without consulting with each other. They were told to respond to each question faithfully as it applies to them individually. The process lasted forty-five minutes. When they had completed the questionnaire, the administrator checked their answers and instructed them regarding the next step. They made a consistent effort to answer each question in a decisive manner. Corey's moderate score on the attitude scale suggests that he answered the questions in an open manner and that he was neither defensive nor overly self-critical. Lyn's low score on the attitude scale suggests the opposite.

Anxiety-There is no sign of an anxiety pattern in Corey's profile. As for Lyn, she is slightly less nervous but apparently more depressed and more subjective compared with Corey. There seems to be a mild sense of uneasiness in her approach to daily things. It seems to be the result of some internal rather than external conflict, which may be the reason she scores low on the attitude scale. It could also be an indication of how she views the assessment. There was no indication to conclude that she suffers from anxiety.

Depressive/subjective- Corey scores below average on the depressive trait. But, he is not depressed. In the subjective trait, Lyn is shown to be more subjective than Corey. This simply explains the balance that exists in their character. For example, Lyn scores

low in the attitude scale. The indication is that there is a sign of a mild sense of uneasiness or potential for a rising tension to a more extreme state of apprehension.

Withdrawal Pattern- The individual must score low in the following areas in order to be considered a withdrawer: active-social/quiet, expressive-responsive/inhibited, and dominant/submissive; and by a high score on subjective/objective. At this level, Corey is described as more active-social than Lyn. Lyn is quieter than Corey and less energetic in social participation.

Expressive/responsive-versus inhibited- Corey is shown to be more responsive than Lyn. He is more talkative and more expressively warm. In this area, improvement is desirable for Lyn. She is described as someone who lacks the ability to show affection without embarrassment.

Hostile-Tolerant Pattern- Here is one area of concern for both individuals. Both of them score above average in the domain of dominance and hostility. This is an indication that they might be potentially unpleasant and at times inevitably would shy away from people around them. Corey is revealed to be more understanding and compassionate than Lyn. This is the largest difference between the two. Lyn is revealed to be a little indifferent.

Dependent-Hostile Pattern- It is rather apparent that even though the couple scores high on dominance and hostility, they do not seek to exercise authority over others. Being slightly above average, the couple could prove to have leadership skills and the ability to take advantage of situations, which may require executive ability. They reportedly have a tendency to be critical or overtly inconsiderate.

Self-Discipline versus Impulsive- Corey is described as being in control and very organized, whereas Lyn is more impulsive. She is hastier in decision making. The high score that Corey has on self-discipline is an indication that he is in control over the emotions and behavior that he exhibits. By contrast, Lyn is much less inclined to think before acting and to have good self-control. Corey may have a compulsive, rigid standard for himself, which might be the main reason for his nervous trait and hostility. But that might also correlate with his compassionate attitudes. Lyn is more susceptible in exercising some forms of self- destructive behavior.

Current Status

In conclusion, Corey and Lyn need improvement in certain areas. One is more critical than the other. Overall, however, they are very compatible with each other. If taken at face value, the report shows that the couple is very similar in personality traits. Despite Lyn's cautious approach, the feedback also reveals the validity and reliability of the results. The golden rule of every intervention, whether medical, psychological, or spiritual, is the gathering of information that comes directly from the patient. The assessment begins when the clinician or the counselor enters into a relationship with hopes for understanding, help, and healing. This relationship will enable both individuals to move toward their goal. Skillful clinicians or counselors will generate enough biomedical and psychosocial information to generate hypotheses about possible causes of the individual current situation, that is, to diagnose the patient or client. At this moment, everything that the clinician or the counselor does sets the tone for the assessment process.

The ethnosociocultural model demands that the therapist understand the need to create goals and plans for the Haitian client to follow. The sequence of understanding the agenda and then setting goals can be understood when the therapist understands that Haitians are community-oriented people. In Haiti, people do not have a tribal system or caste system but the concept of *lakou* that is, the extended family. The extended family is where power, privilege, powerlessness, or affiliative emotion is developed, or abuse may exist. In the familial interaction there is an expressed and unexpressed deep cohesion, an effective use of tradition among the family members. Community supports and connections are very important for Haitians. Assessing the relational tie with the client's family may help the therapist to discover dysfunctional patterns in the client's family background. Counseling a Haitian client will include a full assessment of the extended family. In Corey and Lyn's case, the therapist spends an equal amount of time talking about Corey and Lyn's parent. Then we talk about each other's relationship with each other's parents.

The therapist is sensitive about interpretive remarks and feedbacks. No matter how well a comment is articulated, if it is not accepted by the client, the continuing relationship becomes suspect. Haitian clients will become defensive for fear of being misunderstood. At this point, the client may see the therapist as being one who committed treason against him or her. Many clients do not see any danger in change as long as the change is needed in another family member. The role of the therapist is to help the client to clarify the imagined danger that change may pose for him or her. In Corey and Lyn's case, the therapist provides concrete steps to a positive outcome and disconfirms certain myths they nurse about personal or interpersonal change. The clients realize the need for

change and have already discovered where change needs to occur. But whether the clients have the strength to sustain the change is a different matter. Thus, the therapist instructs the clients concerning how they can master and take ownership of their personal goal and conviction.

After the fourth session, the couple ceases to come to counseling. The couple reports that there is very little communication between the two of them. They still have no respect for one another. There is no unity and harmony between them at this point. There is a lot of bitterness and personal anger in the relationship. Corey says that his wife's behavior is unacceptable and inconsistent. He says that to be true to oneself, one needs to distinguish between fantasy and reality, forgiveness versus forgetfulness, trust versus mistrust. In Corey's world, all things are "my way, no way, or the highway." He admits that he wants to have total control over his wife and their affairs. The couple has only one child. Corey says that he wants no more children. During sexual intercourse, Corey takes care to control his ejaculation to avoid the possibility of impregnating his wife. It is not clear whether Corey's behavior is to punish his wife for his lack of control over her. When he asked about his reasons for not wanting any more children with his wife, he responds that the climate of their relationship is not suitable for a child to grow in. But he made the decision without his wife's agreement. Lyn argues that Corey does not want another child with her because he does not love her. Another issue is the use of money. Corey decides how money should be spent, when, and for what purposes. When this couple returned for continued counseling, they argued about a smell in the bedrooms and in the bed. Corey claims that Lyn is smelly and sloppy. Lyn brought up another issue, that Corey has emotional affairs with other women in the church. She claims that these

other women call her home to tell her information about her relationship with Corey that was supposed to be confidential.

In any ethnocultural group, family members are said to be disengaged, separated, connected, or enmeshed. The two extremes are disengaged and enmeshed, whereas the relationship in which equilibrium exists is described as separated and connected. Many couples who come to therapy come with a history of cohesiveness. The couples in whose family there is equilibrium are said to be more conservative and evangelical. They tend to enjoy emotional closeness and value loyalty. They are connected. A sense of loss is experienced in families where there is separation. Pain and suffering follows from the absence of a loved one, for whatever reason. But a person in this situation tends to heal over time. Conversely, disengaged family members cause unnecessary pain to others and tend to create more problems for the rest of the family. Family members who are enmeshed find it difficult to move on alone in life. They are so close to one another that they become dangerously fearful of separation and disengagement. The energy of these people focuses inside the family. No one is independent; no decision is personal, and no one person is an individual. In this type of family structure, a married couple's relationship is often unbalanced and characterized by a rigid chaotic mood, especially if one partner tends to be more disengaged. In this relationship, the need to control is high, and negotiation is limited to one person's idea. The roles are strictly but never clearly defined. Decision making is impulsive and often ill conceived. Everyone does everything, no one is responsible for anything, and nobody is somebody. In the most balanced Haitian family, the opposite is found. Members of the family create a kind of balance that allows everyone to be themselves in their respective roles. When appropriate, leadership

is yielded to others to ensure of the welfare of the family. However, Corey and Lyn have such a family.

In this ethnosociocultural model, each individual in therapy needs to be evaluated. The therapist may start with the family system, the marriage, and the extended family, just to understand the social norms that govern the behavior of the family members. Having gone thus far, the therapist may safely move on to engage other assessments done by the family members or other individuals concerned in the client's community. Among black countries around the world and in the West Indies in particular, Haitians enjoy a unique legacy, challenges, and future prospects that no other nation could ever match. Even though Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Haitians are proud of their historical values. They are a courageous people who face the struggles of life eye to eye. They value their ties with their cultural heritage as well as their community. An ecological perspective on cultural psychology, proposed by John Berry, contends that "all cultures are equally valued and equally valid collective expressions of human life" (Berry, 1994, p. 115). Berry argues that individual behavior can be understood across cultures only when both cultural and biological features are taken into account. Therefore, the ethnocultural understanding is proposed in this thesis as a viable and effective model for working with Haitians.

APPENDIX 1

A HAITIAN BIRTH CERTIFICATE

A Haitian birth certificate may read that (child name) is the “natural son” or “natural daughter” of to indicate that a child was born out of wedlock. Or the birth certificate may read, “[the child’s name] is the deed of M. [father’s name] and Mme. [mother’s name].” But if the child is of a legal marriage, the birth certificate will read, “[the child’s name] is the legitimate son or daughter of [the parents’ names].”

Meanwhile, children have mothers but may not have any known fathers. This practice continues, where women have children with no clear line of paternity. Or, if there is a known father, he might not be involved in the life of his child.

APPENDIX 2

LIBERTE, EGALITE, FRATERNITE

Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité Republic of Haiti, 5.847. The year 1949 and sixth day of the month of January at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We, Jean Jumeau, Registrar of Port-au-Prince, certifies [*sic*] that citizens Damballah Toquan Miroissé and Madame Andrémise Cétoute appeared before us to be united by the indissoluble bond of marriage sacrament. Inasmuch as Madame Cétoute must consecrate Tuesday and Thursday to her husband Damballah without ever blemish on herself, it being understood Monsieur Damballah's duty is to load his wife with his good luck so that Madame Cétoute will never know a day of poverty: the husband Monsieur Damballah is accountable to his wife and owes her all necessary protection as set down in the contract. It is with work that spiritual and material property is amassed. In execution of article 15.1 of the Haitian Code. They hereto agreed in the affirmative before qualified witnesses whose names are given.

[Signatures.] (Métraux, 1972, pp. 215-216).

APPENDIX 3

DECREE OF DIVORCE

The Hebrew term for “divorce” is rendered in the Septuagint *biblion apostasion*. This term is also found in the New Testament (Mk 10:4). Matthew 5:31 has “writing of divorcement” in English versions of the Bible, but the King James Version of Matthew 19:7 has “writing,” while the Revised Version (British and American) and the American Standard Revised Version have “bill.” The certificate of divorce is called *get*, plural *gittin*, in the Talmud. There is an entire chapter devoted to the subject in the Mishna.

It is not positively known when the custom of writing bills of divorcement commenced, but there are references to such documents in the earliest Hebrew legislation. The fact that Joseph had in mind to put away of his espoused wife, Mary, without the formal act of a bill or at least of a public procedure provides that a decree was not regarded as an absolutely necessary (Mt 1:19). The following was the usual form of a decree:

On the ____ day of the week ____ in the month ____ in the year ____ from the beginning of the world, according to the common computation in the provision of ____, I, ____ the son of ____ by whatever name I may be known, of the town of ____ with entire consent of mind, and without any constraint, have divorced, dismissed, and expelled thee, ____ daughter of ____ by whatever name thou art called, of the town who hast been my wife hitherto; But now I have dismissed thee, ____ the daughter of ____ by whatever name thou art called, of the town of ____ so as to be free at thy own disposal, to marry whomsoever thou pleasest, without hindrance from anyone, from this day for ever. Thou art therefore free for anyone [who would marry thee]. Let this be thy bill of divorce

from me, a writing of separation and expulsion, according to the Law of Moses and Israel.

____, the son of____, witness

____, the son of____, witness

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VITA

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Born: July 11, 1966, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

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Married: July 13, 1991, to Myrta Alaïda Celestin

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EDUCATION

Liçée Alexandre Pétion, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Spring-Valley (NY) Senior High School, 1986-1988

BIBLE SCHOOL

Ecole Evangelique de la Bible, Spring Valley, NY, 1994

COLLEGE

A.A.S., in electrical technology, RCC, Suffern, NY, 1991

B.A. in philosophy, Nyack College, Nyack, NY, 1995

GRADUATE SCHOOL

M.Div. in Christian Education and Discipleship, ATS, Nyack, NY, 2000

M.A. in Old Testament Literature, ATS, Nyack, NY, 2000

D.Min. in Marriage and Family Counseling, GCTS, South Hamilton, MA, (Graduation is anticipated in May 2008).

MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

Church of the Army of Christ-Haiti, youth leader, 1984-1986

Evangelical Church of C&MA of Spring Valley, NY, youth leader, 1986-1989

French Speaking Baptist Church of Spring-Valley, NY, chairman of the Christian education department, 1990-2000

Tabernacle Baptist Congregation, Boston, MA, assistant pastor, 2002-present

TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Coordinator of SAFE Program, Spring Valley, NY, 1996-1998

Nyack College, Nyack, NY, adjunct professor of foreign language, 1998-2000

Gordon College, Wenham, MA, adjunct professor of foreign language, 2003-2007

Light House Christian Academy, fourth-grade teacher, 2003-2004

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, adjunct professor of Old Testament, 2003

Brockton Public Schools, substitute teacher, 2005-2007

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